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*The Politburo—the Men  
who run Russia*

*by*  
WALTER DURANTY

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## FOREWORD

**I**N 1945 the aggressor nations, Germany and Japan and their satellites, were thoroughly beaten in the greatest of international conflicts, World War II. For a time men relived the hopeful days at the end of World War I (once called the War to End All Wars), when they dreamed of an era of peace and amity upon earth; but less than two years had passed before the danger of a third World War, between the two greatest postwar powers, the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R., became evident and appalling. Already in 1947 it was described as the "cold war," in progress, with the implication that a "hot war," or "shooting war," might break out at any moment. In midsummer 1948, at the peak of the Berlin crisis, it seemed to many that the direful hour was striking, and although this fate was avoided for the time being, there was little sign of abatement in the hostility between East and West, little hope of permanent escape from another, more shocking catastrophe.

Yet all is not wholly black in this dark and gloomy picture. Despite the difference of governmental systems which led Imperial Russia to withhold recognition of the infant American Republic for thirty-three years, relations between the two countries were always friendly, and in more recent times Stalin has repeatedly declared that existing differences, no less great than of yore, need prove no obstacle to mutual good will and peaceful association.

The Russian people is fully aware of the wartime help it received from Britain and the United States in material, planes, tanks, guns, munitions, and automotive vehicles, and of the effects of Anglo-American bombing upon

Germany in the (for Russia) decisive year 1943, not to mention the victorious campaign in France and Germany in 1944, just as British and American soldiers know how great a proportion of German divisions—some two hundred of a total of two hundred and fifty—was engaged by the Red Army from 1941 to 1944, the years of preparation in the West, and from 1944 to the day of victory. Nor have millions of Russians forgotten that their lives were saved during the Great Famine of 1921 by the American Relief Administration, founded in World War I by Herbert Hoover for aid at first to Belgium and later to war-starved Europe.

The possibilities offered to American heavy industry in repairing the damage done by German invaders on Russian soil are obvious, provided only that the path is smoothed for such peaceful co-operation.

Finally, the immense extent of that damage and Russia's huge death roll, millions of civilians as well as soldiers, would seem to make war unthinkable, at least for the long period that must elapse before the nation has recovered from its wounds. Why then, in view of all this, is the danger of war so monstrous, and, perhaps, so near?

It serves no useful purpose to indulge in mutual recriminations, or to give the oversimple answer that East and West are everywhere at cross-purposes, and that "never the twain shall meet" except in the shock of battle. Other and more valid reasons can be advanced, as follows:

*a.* The present leaders of Russia have been "conditioned" to an almost neurotic degree of suspicion and mistrust as a result of Czarist police pressure in the decade before the Revolution, when they led the lives of illegal, underground conspirators.

*b.* From the outset it was an article of fanatical Marxist faith or dogma that the capitalist world would never *willingly* permit the existence of a "socialist state of workers and peasants."

c. This belief was strengthened and confirmed by the postwar (World War I) invasion of Russian soil by foreign troops, and by the aid and comfort given by foreign countries to the anti-Soviet White armies, as well as by the subsequent boycott of Soviet trade and diplomatic representatives.

d. The United States, regarded by the Bolsheviks as the arch-protagonist of capitalism, took part in this "capitalist intervention" by sending forces to northern Russia and Siberia, although in point of fact they nowhere came into direct conflict with the Red Army.

e. Widespread and profound misunderstanding and misinformation on both sides, the effects of which have been aggravated by years of bitter prejudice.

As matters stand at present, we seem to have no means of enlightening the Russian people as to the basic pacifism and essential friendliness of Americans towards the rest of the world. But it should be possible to put our own thinking on a sounder basis, in order to see—and deal with—the Russians as they are, rather than as we think them to be, or think they ought to be. In this connection an American elder statesman, Henry L. Stimson, has made a valuable contribution in a recent number of *Foreign Affairs*:

"We are forced to act in the world as it is, and not in the world as we wish it were, or as we would like it to become. It is a world in which we are only one of many peoples and in which our basic principles of life are not shared by all our neighbours. It has been one of the dangerous aspects of our internationalism in past years that too often it was accompanied by the curious assumption that the world would overnight become good and clean and peaceful everywhere if only America would lead the way. The most elementary experience of human affairs should show us all how naïve and dangerous a view that is. . . . It has been our hope that the Russians would choose to be our friends; it was and is our conviction that

such a choice would be to their advantage. But for the time being at least, those who determine Russian policy have chosen otherwise, and their choice has been slavishly followed by Communists everywhere. No sensible American can now ignore this fact. . . .

"Before we can make friends with the Russians their leaders will have to be convinced that they have nothing to gain and everything to lose by acting on the assumption that our society is dying and that our principles are outworn. Americans who think they can make common cause with present-day Communism are living in a world that does not exist."

In his concluding paragraph Mr. Stimson not only shows a penetrating knowledge of the attitude of the Russian leaders, but also avoids the common error of trying to distinguish between those leaders and the Russian people. To all intents and purposes, at least as far as practical politics are concerned, those leaders today are the Politburo of the Russian Communist Party, the Politburo is Russia, and Communism is Russia. This Mr. Stimson understands, and tells his fellow countrymen to understand.

It is on this account that the theme of this book is the Politburo. It is an attempt to clarify our own thinking and widen our understanding of the background and characters of the men who form and direct the policies of the U.S.S.R. The Politburo is traced from its relatively insignificant origin as a steering committee appointed by Lenin for reasons of expediency, through the period of strife within the Communist Party when Stalin, the final victor, was often in a minority in Politburo ranks and had to carry the battle to the wider field of the Central Committee (with a corresponding, although temporary, diminution of the Politburo's importance), to the time when his enemies were eliminated and replaced by his closest adherents, and the Politburo became his chosen instrument, the absolute master of Russia, as it is today.

As a point of personal explanation, I feel that a book of this kind should rigidly refrain from passing any moral judgment upon the men whose lives it chronicles. Their outlook upon civil liberties and "democracy" is so diametrically opposed to our own that any discussion of it would inevitably interfere with the attempt to give a picture of Russia and its rulers in their own terms, not as we see them, nor as we think they ought to be—to paraphrase Mr. Stimson—but as they are.

I have been able to supplement official records by long personal experience of the U.S.S.R. in the years 1921 to 1941, as correspondent of the *New York Times*. From 1921 to 1934 I was the resident correspondent in Moscow and for the next seven years spent four or five months every year in Russia, as travelling or special correspondent, or to replace the regular Moscow correspondent during his vacation. I learned to read and speak Russian fluently, and met many of the leading Bolsheviks, including two formal interviews with Stalin. I do not boast that I have fathomed the Bolshevik mind—or the Russian mind—which seems equally baffling to Westerners and Orientals because Russia itself is both West and East, but I did at least acquire a certain familiarity with Soviet newspapers, speeches, and other means of expression.

W.D.



## PUBLISHERS' NOTE

Recent changes in the Soviet hierarchy which have occurred since Mr. Duranty completed this book are discussed and explained in an author's Postscript on page 239.

## *Chapter One*

# THE ORIGIN OF THE POLITBURO

IT was in November, 1921, that I first heard the word Politburo on the lips of Karl Radek, at that time a notable figure in the Bolshevik regime. By birth a Galician Jew, and hence a subject of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, he had had a good education and spoke half a dozen languages, all, as he frankly admitted, with an "ugly Galician accent." He had an unusual capacity for acquiring encyclopædic knowledge, and something still more remarkable, for absorbing all manner of scattered facts and information and putting them together to draw correct conclusions. With the possible exception of my friend Ryall, who wrote in America under the name of William Bolitho, I never met anyone who was a better hand at assembling facts and finding the answers than Radek. And of course as far as Russia was concerned, he knew a lot of facts.

In those days Bolshevik leaders generally were much more ready to see foreign reporters than in later years. Radek in particular, as foreign editor and chief editorial writer of *Izvestia*, was always willing to answer—and ask—questions with a freedom that would now seem incredible, and his conversation was sharp, subtle, and witty. Indeed he probably owed his life—or at least its prolongation—to his gift for speech, for in the opinion of most of his hearers he literally talked himself out of death at his trial for treason in January, 1937. True, he was condemned to be shot like most of his sixteen co-accused, but his sentence was commuted to a long term

of imprisonment. It was understood in Moscow that he was speedily released from prison and placed under house-arrest in his villa on the outskirts of the city, where he received foreign newspapers, periodicals, and books to analyse and report upon as he had been wont to do in his days of freedom. It was even said that on occasion he wrote the *Izvestia* leading editorial, without signature—which I am inclined to believe from long familiarity with his somewhat peculiar style. Radek's fate has been a mystery since the outbreak of World War II, but he is generally thought to be dead. Some say that he was executed when the Germans approached the Soviet capital in the autumn of 1941, but there is another version that he died of pneumonia in a long and bitter journey on an unheated train when so many of Moscow's non-combatants and useless mouths were evacuated south and east in that critical period.

Not long before my talk with him in 1921, I had interviewed Krassin, the Commissar of Foreign Trade, and had found it extremely hard to get from him any coherent idea of the relation between the Communist Party and the Soviet Government. My colleague, Floyd Gibbons, thought and said that Krassin deliberately tried to evade the issue. I felt that he was trying to explain the interrelation of the two forces as fairly and honestly as he could, but that we were unable to understand it, *in his terms*. Accordingly, my first serious question to Radek was about this interrelation.

He smiled and shrugged his shoulders, stroking his nose with a thoughtful finger. His upper lip, chin, and cheeks were clean-shaven, but he wore an extraordinary fringe of beard from ear to ear which stuck out like a frame for his face and made him look, although his eyes were warm and human, exactly like the English advertisements of Monkey Brand soap. "To give you an idea," he said slowly, "let me tell you what Lenin has often said about the role and duty of our Party. You'll understand

that I'm not quoting Lenin directly, but this is, I think, the substance of his ideas on the subject. The Russian masses are incapable of self-government because they've never had anything but Czarist tyranny for centuries throughout history. The Communist Party represents the only politically conscious force in this politically unconscious mass and is formed of the most advanced elements of the workers, peasants, and soldiers, led by us Marxist intellectuals. Therefore the function and duty of the Communist Party is to act as tutor, leader, and educator of the masses until such time as they are capable of self-government, or what you Westerners would call Democracy. I might say that Lenin regards the Communist Party as the guardian of a minor child. Such a guardianship is a common occurrence under Western law."

"You mean then," I said, "that the Communist Party represents the *élite* of the masses and claims to rule in their name and on their behalf—that is, government of the people and for the people but not yet by the people."

Radek grinned. "You might put it like that, although we intend that it shall be government by the people as soon as the people is capable of government."

"Doesn't that imply," I asked, "dictatorship over the proletariat, rather than of the proletariat?"

"Perhaps, in a sense, but temporarily, just as a legal guardian appointed to manage the affairs of a minor resigns his functions when the minor reaches the age of twenty-one."

"Where then does the Government come in, as distinct from the Party?"

"The Government," he said, "is the practical, organized expression of the will and decisions of the Party. Lenin has said that clearly. The Party is the brain and the Government is the body, both part of the same organism. Obviously, most of the Government leaders—the commissars and their chief subordinates—are Party members. But—and this is important—they don't have

to be Party members, as long as they carry out the will of the Party. In other words, the Party and the Government are not identical but closely connected, and of the two, the Government is secondary because it proceeds from the Party."

"What runs the Communist Party?" I asked. "The Communist Party runs Russia, but what runs the Communist Party?"

"The Communist Party," he went on, "is democratic in the Western sense of the word in that it has an elective system and freedom of speech and discussion. With the important difference that once any decision has been accepted by the Party as a whole, through its elected representatives, that decision is absolutely binding upon every member of the Party from Lenin to the rawest recruit."

I was not wholly satisfied. How did it get that way? "Weren't the original revolutionary leaders a self-constituted group, and therefore didn't any so-called elective rights they might later give their followers depend upon them, to offer or withhold?"

Radek held up his hand. "You're treading on dangerous ground. Weren't the original leaders of the American Revolution a self-constituted group, but can the elective rights they gave the American people ever be revoked?"

"I don't admit the analogy," I said, "but let me put my question differently. What is the supreme authority of the Communist Party, elected or otherwise?"

Radek didn't hesitate. "Why, of course, it's the Central Committee of the Party. There's no argument about that. Forty *elected* representatives of our seven hundred thousand membership."

"It sounds rather unwieldy," I suggested. "Are they in permanent session, or how and when do they meet?"

"Well," he said, "in the beginning, when the Central Committee was small, its members could easily meet and discuss plans and policies, but as the Party grew and

developed, the Committee became larger and it was found convenient to create a small inner group which was called the Political Bureau, or Politburo. Its decisions, however, are subject to the approval of the Central Committee."

"Then," I said, "the Politburo runs the Party."

"No," said Radek, "it doesn't, although you might perhaps call it the apex of the Party pyramid."

Radek's explanation was correct at the time, in 1921. Today the Politburo is the instrument of Stalin's rule over Russia, but in its beginning it was no more, as Radek said, than a convenience, an attribute of the then all-powerful Central Committee of the Party.

From a historical standpoint, the Politburo had come into existence in May, 1917, for the reason Radek had given—the necessity for rapid, decisive action in a period of the utmost pressure. Party membership was doubling from month to month, and the Central Committee, which hitherto had been maintained at a conveniently low figure, was correspondingly increasing in numbers.

Prior to the abdication of the Czar the Bolsheviks were a conspiratorial organization, illegal and underground in Russia, with most of its prominent leaders exiled abroad or in Siberia. But when the Party became legal in March, 1917, on the overthrow of the Czar, its old members hurried back to Petrograd, and new members came flocking in to swell its ranks. The Central Committee was correspondingly enlarged by its own selection or nomination of a number of tried and trusted revolutionaries, who were added to the membership of only nine elected at the Party Conference of April, 1917. In the following month, May, 1917, according to the *Short Soviet Encyclopædia* (1943 edition, p. 1, 455) "was established the Politburo of the Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party." In the following August the Sixth Party Congress elected a new Central Committee, which in turn selected a Politburo and an Organization Bureau

(with overlapping memberships in some cases), later known as the Orgburo. Three months later, when the Revolution occurred, the Politburo had only seven members.

That, I believe, is the most accurate version of the genesis of the Politburo. On the other hand, a writer of a recent book on Russian affairs, David Shub, author of *Lenin: A Biography*, has two contradictory statements about the Politburo. On page 337 of his book he states: "Over the Central Committee was its all-powerful Politburo, *set up in March, 1919*, and consisting of Lenin, Trotsky, Kamenev, Bukharin and Stalin." Yet, on page 239 of his book, Mr. Shub states: "The Central Committee of the Party, on *Nov. 5, [1917]* also elected a Political Bureau of seven to make the final technical preparations" (for the Revolution). Mr. Shub's book shows a profound knowledge of individuals and circumstances with which he was personally familiar. The apparent discrepancy in his account of the Politburo suggests that it merely grew to meet an obvious emergency. From that small beginning, perhaps little more than a matter of expediency, the Politburo has grown in function until it now consists of a group of men who sit in the Kremlin and direct the workings of the whole vast Soviet machine.

## *Chapter Two*

# STRUGGLE WITHIN THE PARTY

**I**N any country, democratic or not, there must be a centralization of authority with power to shape policies. Whether in a bank or business concern or a government the initiation of policies must be undertaken by a very small group. The difference between dictatorship and democracy depends upon the degree to which the decisions of this small group are absolute and binding upon the country or are subject to challenge, criticism, and perhaps to rejection by a congress or parliament, or even by public opinion. Lenin recognized the value of the Politburo as an initiator of policy but he was always careful to have its decisions (or proposals) ratified by the Central Committee, which to the day of his death he declared to be the supreme authority in the Soviet State.

In those days the Central Committee was a democratic organ, in that discussion was free and often heated. Anyone could get up and oppose the proposals of the steering committee (i.e. the Politburo) with complete freedom. But once the Central Committee had voted and its majority had decided on this side or on that, all its members, even and especially the opposition, and every other member of the Communist Party, were bound by complete obedience to that vote, under pain of political death in the form of expulsion from the Party. That was, as Lenin saw it, the "monolithic unity" of the Communist Party. Until the vote was taken there was freedom of speech; but once the die was cast, no doubts, deviations, or reservations were admitted for an instant.



During Lenin's lifetime his authority was so great, both in the Politburo steering committee and in the larger Central Committee, that he rarely had much difficulty in persuading the latter to accept and ratify by vote the proposals of the former. On one occasion, however, in the spring and early summer of 1921, Lenin was forced to threaten to resign before the Central Committee agreed to endorse his New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) which was a startling, if temporary, reversal of Soviet methods and principles.

To the outer world, and to many of Lenin's followers, N.E.P. meant the abandonment of the so-called "militant communism" of the years 1917-21 and its replacement by a system of "petty capitalism," or small-scale but nationwide private enterprise. Lenin found it no easy task to persuade his Politburo colleagues of the need for this reform, and it took him nearly all summer—from March to August 9, when the N.E.P. decree was published—to win for it a majority in the Central Committee. During that campaign Lenin used every device of politics: cajolery, pressure, persuasion by speech and writing, manœuvre tactics of advance and retreat. He reiterated that N.E.P. was only a temporary measure—as it later proved—to get the wheels of trade and industry rolling again in a country stunned and paralysed by years of foreign and civil war and the effects of revolution. N.E.P., Lenin said, was not a fundamental rejection of Bolshevik principles and aims, but a new and mighty "zigzag," imposed by necessity, in the tortuous "Party line."

If Lenin had such rough weather in the pre-N.E.P. debate, Stalin's position was far more arduous during the six years which followed Lenin's death, when the struggle for succession, for power, was fought out in the upper ranks of the Communist Party. Lenin once said that he drove an unruly team (personal and political rivalries within the Politburo predated the Revolution of 1917), but his own prestige left him unchallenged as driver. Stalin

had no such prestige and no great popularity in the Party or the country, while in the Politburo he and his associates were long in a minority against men like Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, Rykov, Tomsky, and Bukharin, who disliked him personally and opposed his policies. He was able to hold his own against them by virtue of his key post as Party Secretary, by playing group against group, individual against individual, by cautious self-restraint and taking advantage of their errors, but above all by carrying the battle into the wider field of the Central Committee, where he always managed to obtain a majority by hook or by crook. That was the true secret of his success and his ace of trumps, but it naturally followed that the importance of the Politburo was so diminished by internal disunion as to be almost negligible. It was overshadowed and its opposition members outmanœuvred by the Central Committee, to which Stalin appealed for support in obedience to Lenin's dictum that it (not the Politburo) was the supreme authority in Russia—which Stalin recognized because of his claim to be "Lenin's faithful disciple and the prolonger of his work."

If that claim were sincere, Stalin may well have begun with much the same attitude as Lenin towards opposition: that it was permissible to debate, and oppose, a policy until the issue had been decided by a majority vote of the Central Committee. As the intra-Party controversy grew acute, Stalin used the majority vote to defeat the opposition and finally to expel its leaders from the Politburo (in 1928-30), but it was not until the concluding phase of the opposition struggle, the Trials and Great Purge (in 1935-8), that Stalin and his associates were convinced, or had convinced themselves, that opposition was equivalent to treason against the state. Long before that, of course, the temporary eclipse of the Politburo due to internal conflict had been ended by the expulsion of opposition leaders and their replacement by Stalin's henchmen to restore its "monolithic unity," but the effects of

that eclipse and of the superiority, while it lasted, of the Central Committee still placed certain limits upon Politburo powers. Only in 1938, when the opposition had been destroyed "root and branch," did the Politburo, after achieving unity, attain absolute authority over the cowed and emasculated Central Committee and governmental machine. In order to enforce the principle of unanimous action rather than control by majority, the part had become greater than the whole.

The struggle for power which followed Lenin's death, and by which the Politburo became supreme, was in no small part due to the division, which became more evident and acute as the struggle progressed, of the Bolshevik leaders into two camps, the "Western Exiles," headed by Trotsky, Kamenev, and Zinoviev, and the Stalin party. The abortive revolutionary movement in the winter of 1905-6 after the Russo-Japanese War was followed by a period of intense repression, suppression, and persecution of all revolutionaries by the Czarist police. Many of them fled abroad to carry on their clandestine activities in Switzerland, France, and England, but there was a hard core of resolute revolutionaries who remained on Russian soil working "underground," illegally, to keep aflame the torch of revolution. Their lives were a series of arrests, imprisonments, and escapes. They were surrounded by spies and provocators. The most merciless pressure was used against their friends and relatives so that gradually, as the price of sheer survival, they learned the cruel lessons of ruthlessness and mistrust. Suspicion became their second nature and one to which they were "conditioned." These are the men who rule Russia today, the men of the Politburo—Stalin and his comrades. They have never forgotten the lessons they learned in those years, and it is probable that much of the current misunderstanding and hostility between the U.S.S.R. and the Western world can be traced directly to this source. In the words of the Psalms,

"the iron entered into their souls" and toughened them to steel. I once asked Stalin where he got his name, "the man of steel." It was said Lenin had taken his name from his first place of exile on the Lena River in northern Siberia and I thought it possible that Stalin had at one time worked in a steel plant and chosen the pseudonym on that account. Stalin smiled and said that it was more of a nickname in his case: "Some of my friends seemed to think it suited me."

As the intra-Party controversy developed, the clash between Stalin's "Home Guard" and the "Western Exiles" became envenomed. The former felt and said frankly that they had borne the burden and the heat of the day while their opponents were living abroad in relative security. What is more, they added, they were always in touch with the Russian people and its needs, whereas the Westerners were doctrinaires and dilettantes absorbed in the theories of revolution, for which they struck no blow. It is interesting to note that at no time did the Stalinists make such attacks upon Lenin, either during his life or after his death. Although leader of the "Western Exiles," his authority was so great that he was exempt from blame or cavil.

History has recorded that the victory rested with the Stalinists, though at heavy cost to the Communist Party and the Russian nation. One of the chief accusations directed by the Trotskyites against Stalin was that he had "betrayed the cause of World Revolution" and was trying to create a *single* socialist state (in Russia), which Marx had declared impossible, and was indirectly supporting Russian nationalism rather than the tenets of pure Marxism. Stalin did owe his victory, in some degree, to the fact that he and his followers had indeed come closer to the Russian people. Hardship had toughened and tightened them enormously and had given them a unity and discipline that prevailed against the often conflicting views of such men as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, and

Bukharin, who fought as a loose coalition against a solid bloc. It was by this unity, enforced by the underground years and reaffirmed during intra-Party conflict, that the men of the present Politburo came to power.

Although Lenin was never engaged in the controversy between the "Western Exiles" and the Stalinist "Home Guard," and was, for the most part, above criticism from any of his followers, there has grown up in the Western World a curious and inaccurate distinction between Lenin and Stalin. Lenin has been presented as a kind-hearted idealist—almost a democrat in our sense—whereas Stalin has been pictured as a ruthless Asiatic dictator. Lenin did allow opposition, up to a point, and therefore might be considered democratic, whereas Stalin came to consider opposition equivalent to treason and therefore is autocratic. But Lenin's actions and speeches against the opposition of the kulaks, the clergy, the bourgeois, landlords, and generals were just as harsh as anything we know of Stalin. Both men were agreed in showing no mercy to their enemies, but Lenin's enemies, for the most part, were outsiders, the foes of the Revolution. Against them he showed no mercy. By the time Stalin came to power non-Party opposition in the U.S.S.R. had been thoroughly defeated.

Stalin's opponents, on the other hand, were dissident and oppositionist members of his own Communist Party, and he smashed them as Lenin had crushed the outsiders. That, in short, was the difference—a difference of time and of personality. In Lenin's day the prime struggle was against the anti-Bolshevik elements in Russia and outside Russia, the counter-revolution of Denikin, Kolchak, and Yudenich, supported by the invasion, or intervention, of French, British, Czechs, Japanese, and Americans. In addition, Lenin's personal authority was so great that he had no real or prolonged difficulty with opponents inside the Communist Party. Stalin's situation was otherwise. Since, by 1924, when Lenin died, internal

and external non-Communist enemies had been defeated, Stalin's conflict was within the Party. His struggle was based on the necessity of winning an authority equivalent to that of Lenin within the Communist Party. Stalin won that fight at the end by the brutal, physical method of killing the opposition. As Winston Churchill said, "A system of government founded on terror may well be strengthened by a ruthless and successful assertion of its power." It was by the assertion of this power that Stalin carried the Politburo to its commanding position in the Soviet governmental structure.

In other words, Lenin and Stalin confronted different problems and solved them in similar ways. Lenin's problem was to defeat an extra-Party opposition, which he accomplished by the Red Terror. Stalin's problem was to defeat an intra-Party opposition, which he finally accomplished by the Treason Trials and the Purge. Whereas Lenin's success established and determined the authority of the Bolsheviks over Russia, Stalin's success established the authority of Stalin and his friends—the Politburo—over the Communist Party and its Central Committee, which Lenin had dominated by personal, moral force. Lenin did not use physical force against his fellow-Communists. Stalin did. In the Central Committee of the Communist Party there were seventy-one members elected at the beginning of 1934. At the end of 1938, twenty-one remained active; three had died natural deaths; one, Kirov, was assassinated; thirty-six "disappeared" from public view; one, Marshal Gamarnik, committed suicide; nine were announced as shot.

Another revolutionary leader, Oliver Cromwell of England, crushed the highest legal body of his own revolutionary government, namely the Parliament, in much the same way as Stalin handled the Communist Central Committee in the years 1934–8. Stalin distrusted the Central Committee as it then was and wanted absolute authority, so he eliminated half of it and had no trouble

with the others. Cromwell wanted absolute authority and found Parliament a nuisance. So he sent a file of soldiers to dissolve it. The net result was that Cromwell was thenceforth Lord Protector and master of England. The same is true of Stalin in Russia. Neither he nor Cromwell wished to become emperor or start a dynasty, yet both of them won supreme and undisputed power with the assistance of a small, devoted group of personal followers. But when Cromwell died his regime melted, and within two years a Stuart king was back on the throne of England.

Here the parallel between Stalin and Cromwell breaks down. Stalin represents the apex of a mighty pyramid, the Communist Party and its junior affiliates, which in turn is reinforced by a governmental system, the Council of Commissars and the Congress of Soviets and all the mechanism of the Soviet State. Cromwell, the military commander, didn't even represent the Puritan Party, and such government as he conducted was his own. When he died his structure fell to pieces, but that didn't happen in Russia when Lenin died, and will not happen in Russia when Stalin dies. From the outset, Lenin created a Soviet Government headed by the Council of Commissars (Sovnarkom), separate from, and *theoretically* independent of, the Communist Party. In actual fact, the Soviet Government and the Council of Commissars was the creation of the Communist Party and wholly subordinate to it.

Through the elevation of the Politburo to a position of dominance, Stalin established mastery over the Central Committee of the Communist Party to a greater extent than Lenin had done. But behind the Central Committee were the four or five or six million members of the Communist Party and the fourteen or fifteen million members of the Communist Youth Organization, and about the same number of Young Pioneers (the Communist Boy Scouts and Girl Guides), all of them Com-

munists and all of them more or less representing public opinion. That Stalin listens to that opinion was indicated by two changes of policy that occurred at times when he was wielding his power to maximum effect.

The first was in March, 1930, when the Communists, under Stalin's leadership, were rushing the peasants headlong to collectivization at a rate and to an extent which the peasants did not like. At that moment Stalin wrote an article called "Dizziness from Success," in which he said that this hasty drive for collectivization was exaggerated and unwise. The peasant masses in Russia welcomed Stalin's statement with delight. They "un-collectivized" their cows and horses and pigs and their families and themselves with eagerness and enthusiasm, and the percentage of collective farms dropped from 95 per cent on paper in the Province of Moscow to about 30 per cent, which represented the number of peasants really desiring the new system at that time. This was not wholly a defeat for the collective-farm programme, but it did mean that Stalin was sufficiently acute to realize that the peasant masses had been pushed too fast and far along the road of collectivization and did not like it. Later on, it is true, the farms were collectivized and Stalin won, but he had to do it more slowly and more carefully because of the pressure of public opinion.

The second case was in midsummer of 1938, when two members of the Politburo, Kaganovich, Commissar of Heavy Industry, who had just made a tour of inspection in the Urals, and Voroshilov, Commissar of War, newly returned from a similar tour in the Ukraine, met in Moscow. On comparing notes they decided that demoralization in heavy industry and in the army had reached such a pitch as a result of the Purge that measures must be taken at once to restore sanity and order. They flew to Matsesta, Georgia, where Stalin was taking his annual vacation, and found him in conference with Beria, his fellow-Georgian, then chief of the Caucasian G.P.U.



and formerly Party Secretary of the Caucasian Federation. One of the younger Bolsheviks, not yet turned forty, Beria, who was devotedly attached to Stalin, had approached the Soviet leader on a mission identical to that of Kaganovich and Voroshilov, namely to point out to him that the Purge was literally ruining the country. Stalin apparently had not realized how unpopular the Purge was and into what an intolerable fog of dismay and confusion it had plunged the Russian people. However, once he was informed of this by Kaganovich, Voroshilov, and Beria, he took immediate and vigorous action, not only to stop the Purge but to correct its evils as far as possible.

Harmful or not, popular or unpopular, the Purge had served the purpose which Stalin had in mind: it had given him full control over the Central Committee of the Communist Party and over the Soviet Government. Henceforth he ruled as a virtual dictator through his mastery of the Politburo. He had chosen its members; and they were devoted to him and his ideas.

### *Chapter Three*

## “DEMOCRACY” AND THE FUNCTION OF THE POLITBURO

**T**o the Western World the Politburo stands for two things which are equally opposed to the basic principles of democracy. In the first instance, there is the simple fact of dictatorship; in the second, the suggestion of a hierarchic system, as self-centred, self-perpetuating, and autarchic as that of the ancient Egyptian priesthood.

Actually, the Politburo represents the Soviet method of solving one of the most disputed problems in the history of government. The idea of democracy is the direct participation of all citizens in every process of government. To some extent this was true of Athens in the fifth century B.C., when the number of citizens (i.e. electors) was relatively small and could meet and did meet in the marketplace to discuss matters of public interest. But even they found it necessary to appoint delegates or representatives who were able to give all their time to public affairs when the mass of citizens had other fish to fry. Out of this delegation of authority, from the mass of electors to their elected representatives, grew the idea of democratic government. The representatives were chosen by the electoral majority and so had their consent, but they were responsible to that majority and had to make good.

The Athenian idea worked well enough as long as Athens was only a small city-state. It can well be compared and has been compared with the town meetings in American communities—which still exist in many parts of the United States and are perhaps the purest form of

democracy we know. But as things grow bigger, new problems arise. It is quite easy for a town meeting of no more than a few hundred electors in Athens, Greece, or Athens, New York, to choose a mayor and town council to administer its affairs, but when Athens, Greece, becomes an imperial, colonizing power, as it did, or when Athens, New York, is just a tiny unit in the vast complex of the United States, this simple, primitive form of direct representation and of control by the electors over the elected has to be modified. That, today, is the problem of democracy.

How successfully this problem has been solved in the United States is dubious. How unsuccessfully it was solved in Athens is a matter of historical record. Now the Russians are tackling it, and it is in response to this problem that their hierarchic system, culminating in the Politburo and dictatorship, developed. There is the additional and novel factor that, over and above and intertwined with their rural and urban soviets (councils, i.e. meetings), which correspond to Rural District Councils in Britain or, more closely still, the town meetings of the United States, there is the Communist Party. Lenin's explanation of the function of the Communist Party was that it should act as educator-guardian of the Russian people until such time as the Russian people should have learned, or been taught, self-government. Lenin's successor has declared that he is trying to carry out Lenin's pledge to educate the Russian masses towards self-government. But there must inevitably be a point along the scale of education where the educator begins to wonder where and when it will be time for him to regard the educated as worthy of independence. In other words, when does a boy grow up? When does his guardian say, "All right, I resign my functions. Now you are an adult, and can manage your own affairs"?

As applied to Russia, this is a vital question. If the Communist Party, through its more or less legally

appointed leaders, has had complete authority over the Russian people for so-and-so many years, when will the Communist Party say, "Now we resign our tutelage because you can stand alone"? At that point, perhaps, there is an inner contradiction in the present Soviet State. Even if it is admitted that Stalin is trying to educate the Russian people to the status of self-government, any knowledge of human nature shows that the tutor abandons his position of authority only with reluctance, or to put it differently, that the tutor—Stalin—will find it hard to admit that the boy of fourteen has grown to be a man.

In Western countries the age at which legal guardianship ends and freedom for the minor begins is set at twenty-one. In Russia no such age limit has been appointed between the guardian—the Communist Party—and the minor, that is, the Russian people, and cannot be, from the obvious nature of things. On the other hand, the Communist leaders claim that some such time limit does exist in the future and that they have never lost sight of it, at least in so far as internal Russian administration is concerned.

That is a matter for the Russians to work out among themselves. But there is another point. May it not occur in the process of tutelage that the guardians or tutors tend to become a ruling class, so distinct and so powerful that it will refuse to relinquish authority, or literally find itself unable to do so? In answer to this charge, that there has arisen a new Communist ruling "class" of officials and bureaucrats and Party leaders and skilled specialists and economists, the Russians assert that it implies a confusion between the words "class" and "rank."

Class distinctions, the Russians say, or the word class itself, are nothing but the carrying on of rank from one generation to another. In any society, American, Russian, or British, a strong individual achieves power, that is, rank, financially, politically, artistically, or militarily. He becomes a "ranking" citizen, a man of outstanding

quality and eminence. He gets it because he earned it. That is rank. But this outstanding man naturally wants to give to the children of his blood the advantages that he has won by effort. There enter the beginnings of class distinction. The son of a great financier has inherited a fortune. The son of a great statesman has the prestige of his father's name. The son of a great general, the son of Mr. Ford . . .

In England this transition from rank to class has been given recognition by the State through the granting of hereditary titles. In America the great fortunes are transmitted by inheritance from father to son. In Russia there can be no such perpetuation of financial power because that is contrary to the principles of Soviet socialism. Equally, there is no transmission of power through honorific titles, dukedoms, marquisates, and the like. There are no great property-holdings in Soviet Russia or "old families" to maintain a ruling class. The utmost that can be said is that there has been established an immensely powerful system of paramount officials, like the present Politburo of the Communist Party, who retain power in the hands not necessarily of their own sons and families but of the individuals whom they approve and select as their successors. This clearly is not a class system but it is a caste system or hierarchy, and as such is as alien to democracy as the class system itself.

A discussion of the democracy and function of the Politburo must take into account three facts already presented. One, that the Politburo in the beginning, under Lenin, was not much more than an inner steering committee for the convenience of the elected Communist leaders. Two, that as a result of the fight between Stalin and the opposition this same Politburo became, by 1938, the supreme power in Russia. Three, that always the Soviet Government has been subordinate to the Communist Party.

Paradoxically, however, there has been a continuous

effort to merge the activities and functions of the Communist Party with those of the Soviet Government. From the time the Bolsheviks assumed power in Petrograd their leaders were also the leaders of the Soviet Government. That is to say that Lenin, the Communist leader, was Chairman of the Council of Commissars (Sovnarkom), and Trotsky was Commissar of War and Stalin was Commissar of Nationalities. Both the latter were members of Lenin's Politburo of the Central Committee of the Communist Party, but like Lenin they were also members of the Sovnarkom, which might be called, in the American or English sense, the "Cabinet" of the Soviet Government.

This overlapping of Party leaders and holders of Government posts (Commissariats) has been a salient, and, to foreigners, puzzling factor of the Soviet system. During Lenin's lifetime the issue was never clearly defined, although it was understood that the Communist Party as creator was superior to the Soviet Government as creation. Later came the period when Stalin established absolute control over both the Communist Party and the Soviet Government, although, as has been stated, there were at least two occasions when Stalin found it expedient to alter his policies in deference to the public opinion of the Russian people.

Nevertheless, all along these troubled years Lenin first, and Stalin as his successor, were trying somehow to accommodate the relation of the Party to the Government. If the leaders were the same leaders, if the Party chiefs, the members of the Politburo, and the Commissars were identical, it seemed to follow logically that sooner or later the Party and the Government should merge, especially because their merger might ultimately solve the problem mentioned earlier of when the "guardian" will give freedom to the "minor." The "Stalin Constitution" of 1936 was a step in this direction. It did not free the Russian masses from Party tutelage but it put clearly

before them—promised them, indeed—a means whereby they should ultimately direct their own affairs.

This process was temporarily interrupted in the years 1936–8 when Stalin's fight with the opposition had reached such a pitch of fury that he was determined to establish the authority of himself and his Politburo at all costs, irrespective of the former rights of the Central Committee of the Party and of the Soviet Government. But in 1941 came the war, which immediately led to a closer working arrangement between the Communist Party and the Government. For ten years or more Stalin, though absolute leader of the Communist Party, had held no important position in the Government. In May, 1941, on the eve of war, Stalin became Premier of the (governmental) Council of Commissars, thus reverting to the ways of Lenin, when Lenin was leader of the Party and Chairman of the Council of Commissars.

A week after the outbreak of war there was formed a war cabinet, called the State Committee of Defence, which had full powers over everything in the Soviet Union. It consisted of Stalin with the title of Chairman, Molotov, Vice-Chairman, and Voroshilov, Beria, and Malenkov. Later this Committee was enlarged to eight and all of the eight were members of the Politburo. This Committee was created by the Presidium of the Congress of Soviets, which according to the Constitution of 1936 was the supreme organ of the Soviet *Government*. The leading members of the Politburo were thus given a place in the *constitutional* order of things. If they had been appointed by the Communist Party there would have been no change because they *were* the Party leaders, but the fact that they were appointed by the Government greatly raised the prestige of the Government, which already had been enhanced by Stalin's taking the position of Premier. The same men continued to rule but they did so now through the constitutional machinery of the Government rather than through Party apparatus. This may seem a

distinction without much difference but the difference exists and is important.

During the war the Council of Commissars (now called Council of Ministers) was enormously enlarged. This process began in 1938 and by the end of the war there were some fifty Ministries (Commissariats) or, as would be said in America, Departments of Government. Once again, as with the Central Committee of the Party twenty-eight years before, the "Cabinet" or Council of Ministers had become unwieldy by its sheer size. As long as the war lasted the State Committee of Defence acted as an inner cabinet, but when that was dissolved in 1945, it was found necessary to replace it. From a practical viewpoint there was no particular reason why the Politburo shouldn't replace it, but the trend since the war has been away from the absolutism of the Communist Party back to the Constitution of 1936. Accordingly, the Kremlin found an ingenious solution. The members of the Politburo were appointed Vice-Premiers by the Soviet Parliament (Congress). All of these Vice-Premiers are members of the Politburo, so that, at first sight, this new departure looks like a Tweedledum-Tweedledee trick in the manner of Gilbert and Sullivan. There had been no real change; the same men were running the country as before. But now they ran it through the constitutional mechanism of the Government rather than through the extra-constitutional apparatus of the Party.

To the average Westerner the Russian single-party system by which everyone is expected to vote a single ticket seems the reverse of all that he understands by the word democracy. Surely, he will argue, the fact of being almost compelled to vote for one list of candidates makes of the electorate no more than a rubber stamp, and deprives it of true freedom. The very size of the Russian votes, that 97 and 99 per cent of all the voters give unanimous approval to the regime in power, seems to us a proof that the whole thing is a farce.



But to the average Russian the fact that he is able to vote at all is a symbol of democracy and the fact that he is being encouraged (or almost compelled) to vote is a proof that he is now taking a part, however small, in the government of his own country. The Russian does not forget that Lenin once said he looked forward to the time when every cook would learn to rule the state. Lenin also said: "Our aim is to draw *the whole of the poor* into the practical work of administration." It may even be true that the average Russian does have confidence in the fulfilment of Lenin's promise that some time in the future the tutelage of the Communist Party will be relaxed and no longer necessary.

In discussing Soviet democracy, there are three other factors which the average Westerner ignores. First, that the Soviet Deputies (Congressmen), selected for public approval, are in the full sense men and women of the people, risen from the working class. Second, that there is far more pre-electoral discussion of the candidates and their platforms than is generally realized in the West. Third, that by Article 142 of the Soviet Constitution, "It is the duty of every Deputy to report to the electors on his work and he is liable to be *recalled at any time*." Finally, there is a great and growing proportion of non-Communists in the Russian soviets, from local administrations to the highest central body. Of course, the percentage of Communists is higher as the scale ascends, but this development does give some justification for the belief that the people as a whole will be freed from Communist domination as its capacity for self-government increases. Stalin is doubtless aware of this, and the Tweedledum-Tweedledee switch between the Vice-Premiers and the Politburo was, at least in part, a continuation and extension of Lenin's policy, in that an outstanding case of dualism between the Party and the Government has been virtually eliminated.

This "amalgamation" of the Politburo and the "Inner

Cabinet" (i.e., Vice-Premiers), was all the more easy to establish because in recent years there has been a tendency for Politburo members to assume a specific function or responsibility for one or another branch of public affairs. Thus, in the Politburo of 1939, Stalin was Chairman, Molotov represented foreign affairs, Voroshilov—war, Kaganovich—heavy industry, Shvernik—trade unions, Beria—internal security, Andreyev—Party matters (Control Commission), Mikoyan—trade, and so on.

This process really began at the end of 1927, after the oppositionist members of the Politburo had been expelled and Stalin was able to concentrate all efforts upon economic progress through launching the First Five-Year Plan. It was thus that men like Orjonikidze and Kuibyshev came up in the Politburo for their ability as industrial organizers on the grand scale.

An interesting point about the Politburo is its growth in numbers, despite the necessity to keep it as small as possible to avoid unwieldiness. Actually, today, it consists of ten members and three "alternates," as we call them. The Russian word for "alternates" is *kandidaty*, which is also applied to candidates for admission to the Party, that is to say, probationers; which, in both cases, implies something more than our word "alternate," to wit, that the candidate will duly become a full member when he has proved his worthiness for that position.

The growth of the Politburo corresponds, one may imagine, to the growth of the Party itself and, above all, to the increasing complexity of the Government. In the United States, finance, industry, and business are still principally in private hands, whereas in Russia nearly everything is owned and managed by the State. Thus among the new list of Ministries (Commissariats) one finds such departments as Building Materials, Rubber, Shipbuilding, Machine Tools, and even Cinematography, side by side with departments as we know them, like the Treasury, Foreign Affairs, Education, and Defence.

Today there are no less than sixty of these ministries, which, for administrative convenience, have been ranged in small related groups of five or six, each group under the supervision of a Vice-Premier. Kaganovich, for instance, as Vice-Premier, has under him all ministries connected with transportation, and Mikoyan all ministries connected with trade. One of the perennial difficulties in explaining the Russian system is that men of proved ability are constantly moved from one high executive position to another as occasion demands, even, in some cases, where the field is entirely unrelated. So, Bulganin, the new Defence Minister, has been successively manager of an electrical equipment plant, Mayor of Moscow, Chairman of the State Bank of the U.S.S.R., and military governor of the Moscow region during the war.

The Politburo as elected by the Central Committee of the Party in 1939 (immediately after the last Party Congress) consisted of nine full members and two candidate members, as follows:

	<i>Age in 1948</i>	<i>Chief Post in 1948</i>
Stalin	68	Chairman of the Council of Ministers (Premier)
Andreyev	53	Chairman of the Committee on Collective Farm Affairs
Voroshilov	67	Vice-Premier
Zhdanov	52	Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party
Kaganovich	55	Vice-Premier, presumably co-ordinating transport ministries
Kalinin	Died 1946, aged 70	Was Chief of State (Chairman of Presidium of Supreme Soviet)
Mikoyan	53	Minister of Foreign Trade
Molotov	58	First Vice-Premier and Minister of Foreign Affairs
Khrushchev	54	First Secretary of the Communist Party of the Ukraine

*Alternates (Candidates):*

	<i>Age in 1948</i>	<i>Chief Post in 1948</i>
Beria	49	Vice-Premier, presumably co-ordinating the ministries of Interior and of State Security
Shvernik	60	Chief of State (Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet)

In 1941 three more candidate members were added:

Malenkov	47	Chairman of the Committee for the Rehabilitation of Devastated Areas
Voznesensky	44	Chairman of the State Planning Commission

Shcherbakov Died

In 1946 Malenkov and Beria were advanced to full membership. Kalinin and Shcherbakov died, and two new candidate members, Bulganin, 53 in 1948, Minister of the Armed Forces, and Kosygin, 43, Minister of Finance, were named. Finally, in 1947, Voznesensky was advanced to full membership. Zhdanov died in September, 1948, and, at this writing, has not been replaced.<sup>1</sup>

Most of these men are, naturally, veterans of the Revolution and it is noteworthy that none of them come under the category of "Western Exiles." Four of the men, Beria, Malenkov, Voznesensky, and Kosygin, were too young to take part in the Revolution. The three former took part in the Civil War as youths in their teens, but Kosygin, born in 1905, was only a child at the time of the Revolution.

Of the ten members and three candidates (as at October, 1948) all save Khrushchev and Shvernik are Vice-Premiers and belong to the "Inner Cabinet," of which Stalin, of course, is Premier. Shvernik, as Chairman of the Presidium of the Soviet Congress, a post which

<sup>1</sup> For the recent 1949 changes see Postscript, pages 239-47.

corresponds to that of President in France, as the official chief of State, is ineligible for membership in the Cabinet, and stands, theoretically, above it. (Zhdanov was not a Vice-Premier because his duties were chiefly concerned with Party affairs.) Khrushchev, as head of the Ukrainian Communist Party with his headquarters in Kiev, is also less concerned with Government affairs.

It may well be asked whether the Politburo is a genuinely elected body or an arbitrary, dictatorial organism, self-perpetuating and self-responsible. This question is of prime importance. On it depends the whole Russian claim to democracy, however the word may be interpreted.

To answer the question fully and accurately it is necessary to go back to the beginnings of the Bolshevik Party. In 1903, a small group of Russian revolutionary leaders met in London. Many of them were already proscribed by the Russian police, but all of them had in one form or another been chosen, elected, or delegated by revolutionary Marxist organizations which had sprung up on Russian soil in protest against Czarist tyranny. The Marxist forces in Russia at that time were an exceedingly small percentage of the population or, to put it differently, the great mass of the Russian people was so backward and uneducated that although it groaned under its chains it had no idea of how to break them. But that universal discontent existed was shown two years later by a blaze of strikes, peasant outbreaks against landlords, and demonstrations of middle-class students, kindled by the increase of hardships caused by the disastrous Russo-Japanese War.

In the 1903 Party Congress, attended by only forty-three delegates representing twenty-six Marxist organizations in different parts of the Russian Empire, there was a sharp clash of opinion between the out-and-out revolutionaries, led by Lenin, and other, more cautious groups. The former won a majority of the votes, hence the name Bolshevik, which means "majority." (The defeated

faction, known as Mensheviks, which means "minority," held fast to their own ideas in opposition to Lenin.) Thenceforward, the Bolshevik Party was legally constituted in so far as any illegal party can be thus termed, or perhaps it would be better to say, duly and formally constituted, in that it did represent the majority of a body of delegates who owed their appointment to the choice of their respective organizations.

Furthermore, the first Central Committee of the Bolshevik Party was actually elected by this majority, and so has a technically justified claim to call its origin democratic through this very process of election.

That claim has certainly been maintained by both Lenin and Stalin from 1903 to 1948. Against that, the methods employed by Stalin to secure a majority approval of his policies by the Central Committee involved first intrigue and later strong-arm tactics of a ruthless nature. But on paper at least the Bolsheviks, from Lenin to Stalin, can show, with chapter and verse to prove it, that the *form* of election (i.e. of democratic legality) was observed and maintained. How far the *fact* of free and untrammelled election—by, for instance, the Central Committee when it elected the Politburo in 1939—was truly maintained, is another story. That Central Committee did what it was told by Stalin, and approved the Politburo selected by Stalin without hesitation or query. Nevertheless, Stalin, who since December, 1930, has been unopposed in the upper hierarchy of the Communist Party as the supreme "leader," is still careful to maintain and observe the forms of election. Which does not alter the fact that the Russian system today is, in practice, a dictatorship and that Stalin, as dictator, wields 90 per cent of that power through the Politburo, which may be considered to share with him the remaining 10 per cent. In short, a power no less absolute than that of the strongest Czar. But, from a strictly juridical standpoint, Stalin can justify the thesis that his power stems, in the beginning

and by succession, from election by the rank-and-file of the Party, however small and illegal that Party may have been in 1903.

By the same token, the Politburo is a political committee, originally selected by the formally elected chief of State (Lenin) and given the majority approval of the formally elected Central Committee.

## *Chapter Four*

### STALIN THE MAN

STALIN has often been called the "Man of Mystery," and the "recluse of the Kremlin," probably for the reason that for seventeen years, from Lenin's death until the summer of 1941, he had no official position in the Soviet Government, although during that period, indeed since early 1922, he occupied the key post of General Secretary of the Communist Party. Yet at least six biographies of Stalin have been written, by friends and enemies, which agree substantially about the principal events in his life.

He was born in 1879 in the little mountain town of Gori, in Georgia. His father, Vissarion Djugashvili, a poor cobbler, who later worked in a shoe factory, died when his son, christened Joseph, was only eleven years old. Ekaterina, the mother of Joseph (nicknamed "Soso," a name he used in his early revolutionary career), was a hard-working and devout woman, who supported herself and her child by sewing and saw to it that he obtained as good an education as possible because it was her dearest wish that he might become a priest. By her efforts he was admitted at the age of fourteen to an Orthodox Church seminary in Tiflis. Here he was most unhappy, on account, he has said, of "the Jesuitic methods and martinet intolerance" with which the school was conducted. He reacted by reading "subversive literature" (Karl Marx and revolutionary pamphlets), for which he was expelled in 1897, in his fourth year of study.

In 1898 he joined the Tiflis Branch of the Social-



Democratic Party, which had not yet divided into two branches, Bolshevik and Menshevik, but was already revolutionary and illegal. Those were days of labour troubles in the Caucasus, due to the immense expansion of the Baku oilfields, where workers were exploited and underpaid, and there were frequent strikes in which "Soso" took part. In 1902 he was arrested for the first time and exiled to Irkutsk in Siberia, from which he speedily escaped and returned to Batum. For the next eleven years his life was a long series of arrests, escapes, and aliases ("Koba" and "Ivanovich" were two of the best-known) until he was finally arrested in 1913 in St. Petersburg and exiled to Kureika, a desolate outpost in northern Siberia, only twenty miles south of the Arctic Circle, from which escape was impossible. He remained there until released by the fall of the Czar in 1917.

Stalin first met Lenin at a Party congress in Tammerfors, Finland, in 1905, but they had exchanged correspondence earlier and Stalin has said that his admiration for Lenin dated from 1902. His French biographer, Henri Barbusse, relates that he also visited Lenin in Berlin in 1907. As is generally known, Stalin has spent little time abroad, but he attended Party congresses in Stockholm (1906) and London (1907), in which he took no important part, and spent some months with Lenin in Vienna, early in 1913.

During the Russo-Japanese war, 1904-5, when Russia was torn by strikes and internal troubles, and the abortive revolutionary movements of 1905-7, which ended with the full re-establishment of Czarist authority in the late summer of 1907, Stalin played the revolutionary game in the toughest way, mostly in his native Caucasus, during the intervals between imprisonment and exile. He became in the full sense of the word, a "professional" revolutionary, a shrewd conspirator, full of ruses and alert to dodge the police, but willing on occasion to lead mobs in street riots. Doubtless too, then and in the later years

of police repression, he learned some of the contempt of the professional for the amateur, of the man of hard direct action for the man of words. In June, 1907, he was responsible for the hold-up and seizure of nearly half a million rubles belonging to the Bank of Tiflis by a daring bomb and gun attack in one of the city squares. Stalin took no actual part in this operation but he was known to have planned it and on that account he was expelled, at least nominally, from the Bolshevik Party, which frowned on such "expropriations," as they were called.

Stalin seems to have paid little attention to his expulsion or perhaps knew that it was more formal than real, because he was arrested in Baku, on the usual charge of revolutionary activity, at the end of the same year. While in prison he and a number of other "politicals" were forced to "run the gauntlet" between two rows of soldiers who beat them with rifle-butts. Eyewitnesses recorded that he walked slowly, head erect, with a book under his arm.

Stalin spent the next year in Siberian exile but escaped in 1909 and early the next year received the reward of his services to the Bolshevik cause in the shape of election, by a congress held in Paris, to membership on the Central Committee of the Party. For unknown reasons, perhaps because he did not wish to live abroad, Stalin declined the honour, and was shortly afterwards arrested and exiled once more. By 1912 he was again at liberty and early in that year was again invited to join the Central Committee after its conference in Prague. This time he accepted and was also named head of the "Russian Bureau," which made him virtual chief of the Party on Russian territory. In the course of that year he edited a revolutionary newspaper, *Zvezda (Star)*, and helped to launch *Pravda*, now official organ of the Communist Party, in St. Petersburg. In December of that year Stalin visited Lenin in Cracow, Poland, and accompanied him to Vienna, where he wrote at Lenin's request an article entitled "Marxism and the

National Question.”<sup>1</sup> Lenin was delighted and wrote enthusiastically to Maxim Gorky about “the wonderful Georgian who has written a great article.” It was published in a Russian-language magazine called *Prosveshchenie* (*Instruction*) and signed STALIN. It was the first time Joseph Vissarionovich Djughashvili used that name and apparently it was on his own initiative. He stayed in Vienna for some months on terms of intimacy with Lenin and his wife, Krupskaya. It was on his return to Russia from Austria, in April, 1913, that he was arrested in St. Petersburg and exiled to Kureika, far north of the Ural mountains in Siberia, where he remained four years.

Long isolation in the frozen north drove many an exile to madness or suicide, but Stalin, as even hostile biographers have admitted, bore it cheerfully enough and maintained moral and physical well-being by hunting, fishing, and chopping wood. Unlike Bunyan, Cervantes, and other illustrious captives, he seems to have written little, but he was “fighting fit and rarin’ to go,” when political prisoners were released by the Czar’s downfall. He hurried to Petrograd—sending Lenin, then in Switzerland, a telegram from Perm *en route*—and reached the capital in March, not long before Lenin’s arrival. One of Stalin’s least friendly biographers, Boris Souvarin, states that the first Politburo was not formed until October, 1917, on the eve of the Revolution, but agrees that Stalin was a member. Souvarin adds that Stalin was also a member of the next Politburo, which he describes as all-powerful, in 1918, and which had only four members, Lenin, Stalin, Trotsky, and Sverdlov (first President of the Soviet Republic, who died of typhus in the following year).

<sup>1</sup> This article, which has been widely translated and published all over the world, offers the Communist solution for the problem of nationalities and national minorities as subsequently applied in the U.S.S.R. This problem has always engaged Stalin’s closest attention. His first appointment was that of Commissar of Nationalities.

Stalin's role in the Civil War has been exaggerated by his supporters and belittled by his enemies, but one thing is certain, that it served to stir up rivalry and ill-feeling between him and Trotsky. Lenin evidently approved of it sufficiently to appoint Stalin to the important post of Party Secretary in January, 1922, and to have the appointment confirmed by the Party Congress in March. Here at last was Stalin's opportunity, of which he took full advantage. Gradually, with infinite care and patience, he built the Secretariat into a great machine—his machine—from its centre in Moscow to the remotest provinces. From top to bottom the secretaries of Party bodies large and small were his appointees, men whom he knew and trusted, holding key positions by his choice and favour.

In the years of Lenin's illness, especially 1923, Stalin shifted men like pieces on a chessboard to suit his plans. Late that year Trotsky attacked him, perhaps unwisely or rashly, in a powerful article called "Lessons of October," which had no small effect. But Stalin's machine was already strong and ready. Throughout the long and bitter struggle for power within the Party, Stalin had always the Secretariat as ace of trumps for any emergency, to remove his adversaries' supporters like pawns and replace them by his own adherents. To this day the most influential men in the Politburo are those who have passed through the Secretariat or are still, like Malenkov and Andreyev, its active and forceful members. (Zhdanov's place on the Secretariat will doubtless be taken by Kaganovich, who has been Secretary of the Moscow and Ukrainian Party organization under the general secretaryship of Stalin.) It may fairly be said that Stalin made of his post as General Secretary the vehicle on which he rode to power.

Stalin's personality, his attitude towards the people, and his opinion of himself have been subject to widely divergent interpretations. Perhaps the best method of approaching the truth about him, as a man, is provided by

examining his reactions to a singular problem which, from the outset, confronted the Bolshevik leaders: how to make a nation of newly enfranchised slaves into self-respecting men and women.

Willa Cather says in one of her books that Moses made a self-respecting nation of his people, who had been slaves in Egypt, by emphasizing the importance of every item of their daily life, diet, and behaviour, as strictly regulated by the ordinance of God. In similar circumstances Lenin took a similar line, but instead of God he set up the State as his Almighty Power and taught his people that, while they as individuals were negligible, and while their destinies, even their happiness and lives, mattered nothing in comparison with the State, they nevertheless had each a high personal value as component parts, however minute, of the State organism.

Stalin expressed the same idea in a more definite manner at the Kremlin reception of June 25, 1945, the day after Moscow's great victory parade. He said: "I should like to drink the health of the people of whom few hold ranks and whose titles are not envied, people who are considered to be cogs in the wheels of the great State apparatus, but without whom all of us—marshals, front and [rear] army commanders—are, to put it crudely, not worth a tinker's dam. One of the cogs goes out of commission—and the whole thing is done for. I propose a toast for simple, ordinary, modest people, for those cogs who keep our great State machine going in all the branches of science, national economy and military affairs. There are very many of them, their name is legion—they are tens of millions of people. They are modest people. Nobody writes anything about them. They have no titles and few of them hold ranks. But they are the people who support us, as the base supports the summit. I drink to the health of these people—our respected comrades."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Frederick L. Schuman, *Soviet Politics* (Knopf, 1946), p. 572.

Such words scarcely seem to conform with the popular American idea of Stalin as an aloof and omnipotent dictator, and one is moved to ask: What is the truth of the matter? How does Stalin regard it? How does he regard himself? The answers are hard to find, but perhaps they can be sought in Stalin's character and conduct, in his acts and speeches.

Few can doubt today that Stalin has become the apex of the Soviet pyramid and the personification of a Cause in the eyes of his followers, but that does not answer the questions how he did it and what he thinks of it. To cut the first answer short one may say that he did it the hard way, by slow steady plugging, by intrigue and patience, and at last by the use of force. That he had it in him from the beginning is indicated by the fact that Lenin chose him to carry the red torch in Russia after the abortive Revolution of 1905-7, and later to be General Secretary of the Party. At that time, in 1922, his name was unknown to the Western world but in Moscow he was already a dominant figure. (I find in one of my own dispatches sent to the *New York Times* in January, 1923, passed by the Moscow censor, the following statement about a possible successor to Lenin, whose illness had incapacitated him during the preceding year: "There is also the Georgian Stalin, one of the most remarkable men in Russia, and perhaps the most influential figure here today. During the last year, he has shown judgment and analytical power not unworthy of Lenin. It is to him that the greatest part of the credit is due for bringing about the new Soviet Union. . . .")<sup>1</sup>

I once asked Stalin why he became a revolutionary. He referred to his dislike of the Orthodox seminary in Tiflis and also spoke about his poor birth and humble

<sup>1</sup> In 1922-4, as Commissar of Nationalities, Stalin brought together in one Union the six separate Soviet Republics, Russia, the Ukraine, Belorussia, Georgia, Azerbaijan, and Armenia, and formed what has been known since as the U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics).

surroundings and revolutionary friends. But perhaps there was something more. In young Djughashvili, later Stalin, was a fire of revolt against tyranny. He was wild and hot-blooded and impatient as Georgians are and hated bitterly the Russian conquerors and their Orthodox Church, which was, in his land of superstitious peasants, a valuable tool of government.

The Russians regard Georgians in much the same way as some Americans regard the Irish—eager, violent, charming, full of talk and fire, but erratic and not always wholly to be trusted. In a way it is true enough, because the history of Georgia is much like that of Ireland, a country of brave men and beautiful women, conquered by a mighty neighbour but refusing to admit the conquest, undefeated in their hearts. It is an American tradition that the Irish will fight at the drop of a hat, and in Russia they say the same about Georgians, and they add, "If you provoke a Georgian you must either fight or make up, because they are vengeful creatures."

Stalin, however, compares to that type of Irishman who has learned to master himself and to turn his native heat into a slow, steady burn of energy and determination—the type who dominated New York City politics during the ascendancy of Tammany Hall and fought with cold unscrupulousness for position and power. Stalin's explosive temperament was harnessed for the most efficient use of his energy. That he succeeded a leader of unquestioned authority, fought for the right of succession, and won, is evidence of the effectiveness of that energy.

Former Ambassador Davies has written in a letter to his daughter his impressions of Stalin as follows: "His brown eye is exceedingly kind and gentle. A child would like to sit on his knee." That was written in June, 1938, when the anti-Stalinists in the United States had already put across an exceedingly different picture of "Uncle Joe."

With all deference to Mr. Davies, it is difficult to

accept that "kind and gentle brown eye." In my first interview with Stalin I asked him an innocent question: "Do you believe in luck?" My purpose was to put some human interest in what seemed a rather drab interview, but I got an unexpected result. That "kind and gentle" eye was hard as chilled steel. He banged his fist on the desk and said: "What do you think I am . . . an old Georgian granny to believe in gods and devils? I'm a Bolshevik and believe in none of that nonsense."

I hastened to explain that I meant nothing personal but was thinking of Napoleon who believed in his star and Cromwell who always said—and it happened so—that his greatest successes occurred on his own birthday . . . in short, belief in luck. Stalin smiled a trifle coldly and accepted my apology and said: "I see what you mean, but the answer is still no. I believe in one thing only, the power of the human will." A fair and sturdy statement, but hardly that of a man whose brown eyes are kindly or on whose knee a child would like to climb.

He said another thing: "Lenin differed from the rest of us by his clear Marxist brain and his unfaltering will." One might underline the last two words, although Stalin didn't stress them. Then he added: "Lenin from the outset favoured a hard-boiled policy and picked men who could stick it out and endure."

Here may be the answer to the question of what Stalin thinks about himself. Take the three phrases, "unfaltering will," "hard-boiled policy," "men who could stick it out and endure." Why should Stalin mention these words of Lenin unless, unconsciously, he felt that they applied to himself?

Stalin said that he admired Lenin and exchanged correspondence with him in the first years of the century but did not actually meet him until December, 1905. From then onwards he never wavered in allegiance, neither in the ugliness of defeat after the 1905-7 fiasco, nor in the darker days when Lenin had a bare handful of



followers in Switzerland, and the world and other Russian revolutionary parties said that Lenin was crazy and would never succeed. Stalin had set his will to follow Lenin with all the native rebellious fire of his Georgian blood transmuted into stubborn faith. When one after another of the Bolshevik leaders escaped from Siberia or prison to an easier life abroad he "stuck it out and endured" in Russia, passing from one alias to another, from one prison to another exile. Small wonder that he grew hard and cruel, until finally in good earnest, "the iron entered into his soul" and instead of killing him fused there with his hot Georgian carbon to make steel. Meanwhile, in prison and out of it, he built up the Party machine from men as hard and full of will as he. Those men today are Russia's Politburo.

## *Chapter Five*

### STALIN THE SYMBOL

IT is exceedingly hard for Westerners to understand how a man of Stalin's character can permit or condone the outrageous flattery and adulation lavished upon him. No new development, it began as far back as the winter of 1927 when Stalin mastered the Trotskyite opposition within the Party and disgraced or exiled its leaders. It was doubtless enhanced by the successful instalment of the First Five-Year Plan in 1929 and 1930, but in recent years, especially during and since the war, it has grown to extravagant heights. Virtually no speech, no newspaper editorial, or radio commentary is delivered without references to "our mighty leader," or "the great Stalin," or some such fulsome phrase. It has got to the point where almost anyone who makes a new invention or scientific discovery attributes part of the credit to "the example or encouragement of our beloved leader Stalin." The name of God was hardly more present on the lips of Billy Sunday than that of Stalin in the Russian mouth, until it almost looks as if the average Russian thought he lived and moved and had his being by the grace of Stalin alone.

The only obvious parallels are two which will certainly disgust the Russians. One is religious—adherents of all faiths from primitive times until today have devoted themselves to praising their God or gods at great length and in the most extravagant terms. The second is described by the novelist Rider Haggard, who in one of his books mentioned the Zulu custom of "making *bongo*"

for their chiefs, especially the greatest chief of all, Chaka, who was known as the Zulu Napoleon. *Bongo* consisted in sitting round campfires chanting the praises of Chaka: "all-great is Chaka," "all-wise is Chaka," "all-powerful is Chaka, the lion who tears armies of foes to pieces, the elephant whose tread shakes the ground like an earthquake." *Bongo* evidently had a certain similarity with religion. It was a mass ceremony in which thousands took part simultaneously, but as in the case of Stalin the praise was addressed to a living man, not to a deity.

There is little doubt that this Stalin-worship—for that is what it amounts to—could be stopped by him if he so desired, but that does not necessarily mean that he likes it. In point of fact on more than one occasion he has shown displeasure at excessive flattery. The *Bolshevik* (the official Party monthly) in March, 1947, reported Stalin's comment on a military history written by one Colonel Razin, in which the Soviet leader said "the panegyrics [of himself] grate upon the ear," and "it is really uncomfortable to read them." The *New York Times*, March 9, 1947, reported that Stalin had recently used a blue pencil on a biography of Lenin in which he (Stalin) was praised excessively. He left only one sentence about himself, that "he was and remains a loyal disciple of Lenin."

Why then does Stalin tolerate this *bongo*? There are several reasons. It must be remembered that the custom of centuries decreed a profound veneration for the Czar, the "Little Father" on earth as God was the Father in Heaven. Perhaps this was habit rather than servility but it was a habit that had become second nature for the Russian people. Secondly, is it not possible that the Bolshevik rejection of all inspired religions has left a void which perhaps unconsciously is filled by Stalin-worship? One of the earliest and ablest writers about Soviet Russia, Arthur Ransome of the *Manchester Guardian*, who covered the Bolshevik Revolution and was

a personal friend of Lenin, startled the world at that time by stressing the parallel between Bolshevism and a new, if iconoclastic, religion, as other observers have noted since.

The embalming of Lenin and the fact that his tomb has become almost a shrine, visited annually by hundreds of thousands of pilgrims, is not quite deification but it comes singularly close to it, especially when one recalls the old Russian belief that the bodies of saints remained incorruptible until the Judgment Day. This does not mean that those who visit Lenin's tomb with every sign of respect and veneration do actually think of him as a saint, much less as God, but the parallel is obvious none the less. So is the fact that a picture or bust of Lenin is to be found in the "Lenin Corner" which exists in every Russian factory. Pictures of Stalin adorn every public building, railroad station, sports stadium, and every Communist home throughout the length and breadth of Russia. Not merely the gigantic pictures of him (and Lenin)—as much as sixty feet high—which look down on every square on national holidays, but the small pictures which have replaced the icons (religious pictures) in every Communist household and even hang side by side with the icon in many a Russian household of god-fearing folk. On one occasion a group of Young Communists in Tiflis, Georgia, were rebuked by the local press for placing a small electric light in front of Stalin's picture in obvious imitation of the candle blessed by a priest which used to burn before the icon.

There seems to be little evidence that Stalin or his associates have deliberately evoked the idea of Lenin-worship or Stalin-worship, although they may well have felt and perhaps still feel its spiritual value as a unifying and encouraging force. In the case of Lenin I remember that most people in Moscow expected that his body would be cremated and some even went so far as to think that the cremation might be public, in the form of a

huge funeral pyre in the centre of Red Square. No one seems to know—or is willing to say—who first made the suggestion to embalm Lenin's body and exhibit it in the mausoleum. It can be taken for granted that the decision must have been made by the then Politburo or even the Central Committee, but the details have never been made public.

Certainly in personal conversation or in the wording of his speeches, Stalin gives no sign of arrogance or undue self-esteem. This has been noted by everyone who comes into contact with him. Churchill, for instance, said: "Premier Stalin left upon me an impression of deep, cool wisdom and absence of illusions . . . a man direct, even blunt in speech . . . with that saving sense of humour which is of high importance." Wendell Willkie said: "As I was leaving him after my first talk, I thanked him for the time he had given me and the honour he had conferred upon me in talking so candidly. A little embarrassed, he replied: 'Mr. Willkie, you know I grew up a Georgian peasant. I am unschooled in pretty talk. All I can say is I like you very much.' He is a simple man with no affectations or poses." Former Ambassador Davies in an official report to Secretary Hull, June 9, 1938, on his interview with Stalin, said: "His demeanour is kindly, his manner almost deprecatingly simple. . . . He gave me the impression of being sincerely modest."

Some answers may be found to the apparent paradox of this "modest" Stalin who condones hero-worship of himself, by examining the changing attitudes both of the Communists and of the Russian people towards their two great leaders, Lenin and Stalin. Many foreign observers of the Russian scene have noted what they thought was a paradox in that the Bolsheviks of the Revolution, which owed so much to three or four outstanding individuals, appeared to deny the Carlyle theory of Great Men as Heroes who mould history, in favour of the view that leaders were simply the product of time and circumstance.

This is not quite correct; the Bolsheviks hold the Marxist doctrine that leaders can only be effective if they emerge at the right time and follow the right course, but this is a different thing from saying that the leader is unimportant. (There is a good instance of this belief in Bénét's story in which Napoleon is born fifty years too soon and dies insignificantly as a retired major surrounded by a greedy family in a little town on the French Riviera.)

Also, long before the Revolution, Lenin had violently opposed the theory that the "people" or "masses" were just a mob to be led by the nose by self-appointed "heroes," but that doesn't mean that Lenin or his followers underestimated the part which he played in history. Evidence of his personal importance was given by his followers in July, 1917, when the Bolsheviks had suffered a setback and Kerensky's government wanted to arrest Lenin who was then in hiding. The Bolshevik Central Committee discussed the point whether Lenin should not surrender himself but the matter was settled by Stalin's argument that Lenin was far too important for his life to be placed in jeopardy.

Four years after the Revolution, Lenin had become an object of awe as well as affection to the people of Russia, and the country already was full of legends which attributed to him almost miraculous powers. During the three days which preceded Lenin's funeral in January, 1924, threequarters of a million people passed through the hall in Moscow where his body lay in state. Many of them had travelled hundreds of miles or walked all day and all of them had to wait five or six hours in line—a gigantic line that extended for more than a mile in the grip of the bitterest cold, 30° below zero Fahrenheit. I talked with a middle-aged peasant whose long beard and shaggy moustache were white with frozen breath. With him were his wife and two small boys. They had tramped in from a village twenty miles north of Moscow. He was not so well off now as before the Revolution, he said.

They had taken four of his five cows and some land that his father bought, but Lenin was a good friend of the peasants, a Russian man like himself, not an alien Czar, and he had come to bid him godspeed. "My wife and children wanted to come too," he added. "So we set off this morning before it was light and walked all day."

The actual funeral in Red Square was even more impressive. Massed bands played the *Internationale* in slow time, and from the vast multitude in the square rose a fog of congealed breath like a smoke sacrifice. So cold it was that beards, hats, collars, and eyebrows were white as the snow-clad trees in the little park beneath the Kremlin wall. Few dared take off their hats as Lenin's body passed to its last resting-place. They stood at salute with raised hands.

In the streets leading to the square, tens of thousands more, lined up under mourning banners, awaited admission. At the corners soldiers built log fires, round which each squad, relieved hourly owing to the intense cold, stamped and beat their arms against their bodies. In conclusion, I quote the words of the funeral oration: "We are burying Lenin. The genius of the workers' revolution has gone from us. Never in the world was such intelligence, such inflexible will as that of Lenin, who led our government through its worst dangers."

Lenin's stature, of course, was magnified by death. Half the gods whom men have worshipped were only men at first and reached godhead after their lives on earth had ended. Lenin, moreover, had won to his pinnacle in Russian esteem by long years of polemic writing and discussion, before the Revolution, in which he had established his intellectual superiority. Stalin's position was different. Up to Lenin's death the best they could say of Stalin, as his own historians do say, was that he was Lenin's representative in Russia while Lenin was exiled, the carrier of Lenin's torch, and perhaps later, in the early days of the Revolution, Lenin's watchdog.

Raymond Robbins, the Chief of the American Red Cross in Petrograd at the time of the Revolution, who liked Lenin and often saw him because he was less unsympathetic to the Bolshevik movement than most of the other Americans, once told me that whenever he went to see Lenin, Stalin was somewhere around, watchful and on guard, like a sentinel. Stalin once corrected me when I referred to him as "the inheritor of Lenin's mantle" by writing instead the words (in my dispatch), "Lenin's faithful disciple and the prolonger of his work." That was many years after Lenin's death, when Stalin had established an authority in Russia equal to or greater than that of Lenin, but had not begun to approach Lenin's prestige, far less the awe and admiration which Lenin had evoked.

Stalin's supporters say that he rose to Lenin's height in the darkest period of World War II, during October–November, 1941, when the victorious German armies were battering at the gates of Moscow. There had been a near panic in the Soviet capital. All foreigners had been evacuated, and half the civil population. The Germans were bombing the city, and its inhabitants who remained were working night and day to improvise defence works. Divisions of half-trained but devoted Communists were dying on the front, while regular forces were being massed north and south for the counter-blow which ultimately saved the city. No one knew what was happening, all that the Moscovites knew was they would never surrender and that the German commander had broadcast a pledge to fly the swastika over the Kremlin by November 7, the anniversary of the Revolution.

On the night of November 6 the word was passed around among the army leaders, the civilian leaders, and the heads of Communist groups, that they should come the next morning to a certain subway station. There were not many of them, a few hundred, the *élite* of Moscow's defence, gathered before the entrance to the subway,



when Stalin suddenly emerged and made a brief but encouraging speech. To the best of their knowledge he might have fled with the Government to the Volga. He might have been living in an armoured train on the outskirts of the city, as indeed he did for some weeks in that critical period. None of them knew about that, but what they did know and saw was that he was there, in Moscow, with them, as their leader. And again comes the story from an eyewitness that when they looked at him their faces were aglow and their hearts were filled with a glory of hope and admiring pride. That, it has been said, was the hour when Stalin approached the stature of Lenin.

## *Chapter Six*

### STALIN—FIRST THINGS FIRST

THE first time I talked with Stalin was at the end of November, 1929. I noted particularly that he spoke in a quiet, almost toneless voice, except once or twice when he desired to give a point special emphasis. Thus in my report I find the words, "Stalin spoke slowly, with a soft southern slur, phrase by phrase, economizing on word and gesture." He was talking about the great depression which had hit the United States a month earlier, saying that it would lead to an embittered struggle for markets between the capitalist powers, which is the usual Marxist theory about the cause of wars.

"Then you think a new war inevitable?" I asked him.

"When, where, and on what pretext it will begin I cannot tell," Stalin replied, "but it is inevitable that the efforts of the stronger powers to overcome the economic crisis will force them to crush their weaker rivals. That does not necessarily mean war . . . until a later day when the giant powers must fight for markets among themselves."

His voice was still quiet, but there was a vibration of energy in his tone. He continued:

"It is a law of capitalist society that the strong must prey on the weak, and in many strong countries there are persons who see this clearly and wish to use the direct method, namely war. Sometimes those wars take the form of 'colonial expansion' or 'expeditions,' but the aggressive spirit never dies.

"On the other hand, there are other elements in strong

countries—more far-sighted men who calculate more cautiously and fear that war, especially a new war in Europe, would be too risky and would bring upon them greater loss than profit. They restrain the hotheads and there comes a sort of balance of forces between the two groups, the issue of which will be determined by circumstances.

“Both of them will readily crush a weak enemy if it can be done with little or no risk, but for the moment no such easy and profitable venture offers itself. They might have tried it against the U.S.S.R. five or six years ago, but they waited too long. It is now too late.”

Stalin hurled out the last words without raising his voice but with a sudden access of restrained power that had an impact like a blow. He resumed:

“You know the situation in Europe today—like an armed camp, with more money wrung each year from nations now half-bankrupt, some of them as a result of the economic crisis. Things can’t go on like that—the breaking-point must come somewhere.

“Far-sighted elements everywhere are trying to call a halt, but they are powerless. Look at this Geneva Conference—it demonstrated the unwillingness and impotence of the League of Nations to cope with the growing danger. Surely everyone must see that things can’t go on like that.”

“You mean,” I asked, “that the status of Europe as established by the Versailles Treaty cannot last?”

Stalin said:

“I don’t think the Versailles settlement”—he paused—“can last long.” Then he added emphatically:

“It cannot last.”

“Suppose,” I suggested, “that the anti-war elements you spoke of realize the danger and try to avert it by a world economic conference or similar means. What would be the attitude of the Soviet Union towards that?”

“There was the first economic conference,” Stalin

replied, "then the small conferences of agrarian powers, and there is now talk of a bigger conference of world grain-producing states. If we are invited, I think this country would accept—we once sent Osinsky to one such meeting at Geneva."

"*You see, then,*" I said, "*no reason why capitalist and communist systems should not exist side by side without fighting?*"

"*They have not fought for ten years,*" said Stalin dryly, "*which means they can co-exist.* We don't want to fight and some of their people don't either, and it is a fact that we 'put water in their mill' " (he referred to Russian orders for foreign machinery). "There are numerous factors involved, you see—as whether war against us would pay and how great the risks would be. They know now we would fight them to the last man."

It is interesting to note that throughout the conversation Stalin showed no sign of doubt, weakness, or uncertainty about Russia itself. He was looking forward, not backward.

"All right," I said then, "take America. You don't want war and America doesn't want war. You are two of the biggest nations in the modern world. Why can't you get together and assert your will for peace?"

Stalin smiled somewhat sourly and said:

"America knows where we stand from Litvinov's declarations. We have done what we could, but we won't hang on their necks. We still are willing to do what I said before: get the debt question settled by the payment of an extra percentage on credits or a loan and resume normal relations, as we have done with the rest of the great powers.

"They know we can pay and do pay our debts and fulfil our pledges—it is up to them. An extra percentage—that is a mere trifle. A debt settlement with America—that is easy enough; it is a comparatively small matter, anyway, but—there is something else."

He paused and repeated thoughtfully, as if puzzled:

"It is not debts that matter—there is something else."

I plunged in boldly:

"You mean 'Bolshevik propaganda,' or the 'arming-the-burglar' theory, and that, as many Americans say, 'Why help build up a country whose avowed aim is to overthrow our Constitution and upset everything which we believe made the greatness of the United States?'"

Stalin refused to be drawn out.

"They provide equipment and technical help, don't they?" he said rather sharply. "And we pay them, don't we, for everything—pay top prices, too, as you and they know. Propaganda doesn't do *anything*" (he stressed the word heavily). "Constitutions and systems are changed by natural causes, not by talks or books."

"In the old days," Stalin continued, "the Czars blamed the French or German socialists for importing socialism into Russia, forgetting that the conditions of life and not socialist propaganda determine the course of events. Now I suppose they are making the same mistake in the United States when they say we are re-exporting socialism to Europe."

"The re-exportation of a finished product," I broke in, "perfected by your experience and scientifically adapted to modern needs?"

"Not a bit of it," said Stalin impatiently. "Of course we Bolsheviks studied carefully the French, American, and German revolutions in the past, especially their most radical revolutionary wings, and learned from their experience how to overthrow the old regime. That was their real export of revolutionary methods."

"If you want to say we are sending back to the West its merchandise by re-exporting the practical experience of creating a socialist society, then you are right and I take it as a compliment. And how do we do it? We show visiting foreigners and the whole world that socialist production is possible and is growing and will succeed."

“Whether they like it or not, socialist economics will develop and exist in turn for them to study. That is propaganda, too—but there is nothing to be done about it.”

In this interview Stalin, although sure of Russia's future, never mentioned his own part in making Russia strong.

Although some explanations of it have been given, the problem of Stalin-worship is far from solved. How, for instance, can the excessive adulation which Stalin receives be accommodated with the fact that he himself never speaks of anything save the “Marxist-Leninist” doctrine as Russia's guiding line, or that no one else ever mentions “Stalinism” as a rival to “Marxism-Leninism”? Russians proffer the most fulsome praise to Stalin as an individual leader, as an example, and a source of inspiration and encouragement, but they seem to neglect something which may be considered his most important and positive contribution to the development of the U.S.S.R., namely, Stalinism.

Seen in retrospect, Marxism was a theory, a social and economic philosophy which Lenin chose as the ideological basis of his state. True, it was perhaps more suited to Russia than many Westerners imagine, if only for the reason that bourgeois individualism had not the economic and political strength in Russia which it had attained in the West. There were kulaks (rich peasants) in the villages and a few strong and successful men who rose from the working class to achieve prosperity, but speaking by and large they were only a drop in Russia's bucket of ignorance and poverty. So that Lenin was able to jump from the dictatorship of the Czar to the dictatorship of the proletariat without the kind of opposition from an intermediate bourgeois class which made the French and Cromwellian revolutions only a transfer of power from one group of rulers to another, rather than a great social upheaval such as occurred in Russia.

Lenin tried to apply Marxism, the theory of communism, to the needs and requirements of Russia. He soon found that it could not work without changes and modifications to suit the Russian character and situation. Thus Lenin was forced to replace the makeshift "militant communism" of the early Revolutionary period by the "New Economic Policy," as he called it, which was definitely a step away from socialism, not perhaps back towards capitalism but towards small-scale private trade and petty industry. Here was a Leninist application of Marxism which Marx and his early followers had not foreseen, as Stalin himself once pointed out, when he said:

"We have no right to expect of the classical Marxist writers, separated as they were from our day by a period of forty-five or fifty-five years, that they should have foreseen each and every zigzag of history in the distant future in every separate country. It would be ridiculous to expect that the classical Marxist writers should have elaborated for our benefit ready-made solutions for each and every theoretical problem that might arise in any particular country fifty or one hundred years afterwards, so that we, the descendants of the classical Marxist writers, might calmly doze by the fireside and munch ready-made solutions."

The key phrase in Stalin's statement is this quote, "munch ready-made solutions." What happened in Russia was a constant and necessary adaptation of Marxism-Leninism to Stalinism, that is, a steady development of theory to correspond with the facts of Russian life. In this connection, it is interesting to note what Harold Stassen wrote after his talk with Stalin in 1947. Stalin said to him that Marx and Engels could not possibly foresee what might happen forty years after their deaths, from which Stassen deduced, and found encouraging, that Stalin no longer wholly shared the early Marxist view that class warfare must be a struggle to the death and that capitalism and communism could not live

amicably together in the world. This bears out what Stalin said to me in 1929 and has consistently repeated in the ensuing eighteen years.

Despite the fact that Marx imagined his philosophy of socialism would first be applied to a Western, industrialized country, which Russia certainly was not in 1917, it can be argued that collectivism, which is certainly much nearer socialism than it is to private enterprise, has suited and does suit the Russian masses better than the Western theory of individualism and private enterprise, which to them was an alien growth. Marxism also was alien, but collectivism was not. Lenin took the Marxist boot and tried to shape it to fit the Russian foot, but found he had to abandon it, at least temporarily, in favour of the New Economic Policy, although he always maintained that this was a political manoeuvre rather than a basic change. Stalin got rid of N.E.P. (New Economic Policy) as soon as he could, but instead of reverting to dogmatic Marxism, went forward to a collectivist system which the Russians now call socialism and which actually is not far removed from state capitalism. This is Stalinism as distinguished from Leninism.

Stalin is giving the Russian people—the Russian masses, not the old half-westernized businessmen, bankers, industrialists, intellectuals, and landlords, but Russia's millions of peasants and workers—something they can understand and like, namely, a joint effort, a collectivist effort. Collectivism is as acceptable to them as it is repugnant to the average Westerner, which is one of the reasons why Russian Bolshevism will find hard sledding in the United States, Britain, France, and other European countries north-west of the Rhine.

Stalinism, too, has re-established the semi-divine supreme autocracy of a central authority, and has placed itself on the Kremlin throne as a ruler whose word must be obeyed and whose frown spells ruin. To freeborn Americans, or to the British with their tough self-



righteousness, or to French individualism, this makes small appeal, but to the Russians it is familiar and natural enough. Stalin does not think of himself as dictator-autocrat, but as the guardian of the "Party line," which is not only a policy but also a rule of thought, ethics, conduct, and purpose that no one may transgress. It is a flexible line and subject to "zigzags," to use Lenin's own term. But its power in Russia equals that of many an inspired religion.

Many Westerners seem to believe that Soviet policy is rigid and unswerving, that it has certain definite objectives like world domination or the world-wide spread of communism, which it never ceases to pursue. Anyone who studies the history of Russia since the Revolution, and the career of Stalin in particular, must find it hard to accept so sweeping an estimate. One of the reasons for Trotsky's hostility to Stalin was his belief that Stalin had sacrificed the ideal of world revolution for the sake of socialism—or collectivism—in Russia. There may be some truth in this charge. Stalin perhaps believes that ultimately socialism or collectivism will replace private enterprise the whole world over, but in the meantime, during his lifetime, he has the job of making collectivism work in the U.S.S.R., that is of building a successful industry and agriculture on a socialist basis or, in short, of adapting the fundamental theories of Marx to fit the Russian character and situation.

## *Chapter Seven*

# STALINISM

IN discussing Stalin, Stalinism, and the achievements of the man and his regime, it is necessary to consider the arguments of the Trotskyites and Western anti-Stalinists. They have tried, not without success, to propagate the view that Stalin was an insignificant figure in the Russian Revolution, an ignorant Georgian who took credit for other men's work and by all the evil processes of intrigue, murder, and falsification of history managed to assume the lion's coat of greatness. Against them there is the Soviet record written by Stalin's adherents, which also contains a perversion of truth and a deliberate intent to minimize and distort the services of Trotsky and other opposition leaders.

In regard to Stalin three facts can hardly be controverted. First, in January, 1912, at the Prague Conference of the Communist Party, Lenin proposed the election of Stalin to the Central Committee of the Party and placed him at the head of the "Russian Bureau" in charge of all Communist activities on Russian soil. Second, when the Politburo was first formed by Lenin in May, 1917, Stalin was chosen by Lenin to be a member and has been re-elected to it at every Party Congress since. Third, when Lenin felt death's hand upon his shoulder early in 1922, he named Stalin General Secretary of the Communist Party, which he knew and all the Communists knew was the key position in the Party, as Stalin later proved by using it to make himself Lenin's successor.

Irrespective of Stalin's right to leadership, the next

question is, How far has he lived up to his responsibilities? In other words, What has he done for his Party and his country? The list can be made as follows:

1. As Commissar of Nationalities, he played the major role in forming the U.S.S.R. (Union of Soviet Socialist Republics), which was a far more difficult job than forming the thirteen American colonies into the United States, because the Soviet Union was composed of dozens of diverse and formerly hostile peoples with different languages, cultures, and religions.

2. He created a Russian heavy industry free from foreign control and independent of foreign technical personnel.

3. He took the twenty-five million small peasant holdings—they could hardly be called farms—that were the backward and wasteful agriculture of Russia, and reorganized them into a modern, mechanized system of collective farming.

4. He led his country to victory through the most devastating and disastrous of wars.

To accomplish these four labours of Hercules, Stalin had to break with some of the traditions (or even principles) of Marxism and perhaps of Leninism also. For that he had the precedent of Lenin, who broke with Marxist principle with his New Economic Policy (N.E.P.). In creating a collectivized agriculture and a native heavy industry, Stalin followed Marxist-Leninist doctrine, but his formation of the Soviet Union and his conduct of the war brought in factors of nationalism which Marx might have disapproved and Lenin might have questioned. By forming the Soviet Union, Stalin established a state as new in its day as the United States was in 1787. Marx undoubtedly and Lenin probably did not think of a single socialist state. They thought in terms of world revolution and a world socialist system, which to some degree justified Trotsky's attacks upon Stalin as a backslider from

Marxism-Leninism. In this case there may be room for argument about Stalin's stand for nationalism versus internationalism, but in his conduct of the war and *in preparation for war* Stalin swung far over to the nationalist idea.

As far back as 1934 or 1935, that is to say when Hitler's menace began to grow apparent, there began a definite trend towards nationalism in the U.S.S.R. When the Soviet press and public speakers referred to their own country, they no longer called it "socialist fatherland" or "the socialist homeland of the workers." They used instead the old Russian word *rodina*, meaning "birth-land," a word that had been barred ever since the Revolution because it conveyed a narrow sense of Russian national patriotism rather than the international solidarity of the proletariat. Simultaneously, plays and motion pictures, and music too, began to glorify such un-Bolshevik heroes of the Russian past as Peter the Great. Patriotic books like Tolstoy's *War and Peace* were printed in millions of copies and the radio was used to stress the duty and privilege of all Russians to defend their country. There was nothing surprising in this to anyone aware of Hitler's attitude towards Bolshevism and his avowed desire to grab the wealth of the Urals and the Ukraine, but it was a distinct departure from the internationalism of Marx and Lenin.

As the war developed, this nationalist slant became more pronounced, indeed the war was officially termed "the Great Nationalist [i.e. patriotic] War."

There arises here a question of semantics. To many of us the word nationalism connotes something narrow and greedy. But most of us, if asked what we think about "patriotism," will probably say that it is a fine and noble quality at any time and in wartime the most glorious of qualities. The Russians have no exact word for patriotism, so to them the noble side of love of one's country can only be expressed by the word nationalism. For the narrow and greedy part of it they use the word chauvinism,

French in origin, which does imply all the bad features of national boasting, a contempt for other nations as lesser, and desire for foreign conquest. Lenin was surely more internationalist than nationalist, but his attacks on nationalism were directed against its chauvinistic side rather than its patriotic side. Stalin undoubtedly championed nationalism before and during the war for patriotic reasons but he, too, has gone on record as opposing the narrow-minded greediness of chauvinism.

Thus at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party in March, 1921, Stalin made a report condemning what he called "Great-Russian chauvinism," that is, the Czarist-fostered idea that Russia was the centre and ruler of the Empire and that other nations in the Empire varied from the slight inferiority of Ukrainians and Belorussians to the utter inferiority of Caucasian and Central Asian peoples, which were, in Czarist eyes, little more than colonial slaves. The Czarist conception might be compared to that of 100 per cent Englishmen in the nineteenth century who admitted that Scotland and Wales were nearly as good as England, and the Colonies (Dominions) weren't so bad, but then of course far below that came India and the "subject" races of the Empire. Against this viewpoint Stalin spoke most strongly on all occasions. On the other hand, at the victory celebration, May 24, 1945, he said:

"I drink in the first place to the health of the Russian people, because it is the most outstanding nation of all nations forming the Soviet Union. I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people because it has won in this war universal recognition as the leading force in the Soviet Union among all the peoples of our country. I raise a toast to the health of the Russian people, not only because it is the leading people, but also because it possesses a clear mind, staunch character, and patience.

"Our Government made not a few errors. We had moments in 1941 and 1942, when the situation was

desperate, when our Army was retreating, abandoning our own villages and towns . . . because there was no other way out. A different people could have said to the Government: You have failed to justify our expectations; go away—we shall install another government which will conclude peace with Germany and secure for us a quiet life. The Russian people, however, did not take this path because it trusted the correctness of the policy of its Government and it made sacrifices to assure the rout of Germany. And this confidence of the Russian people in the Soviet Government proved to be that decisive force which ensured an historic victory over the enemy of humanity—over fascism. Thanks to the Russian people for this confidence.”

What Stalin did for the industrialization of Russia is a matter of record. Although it has been suggested that he produced the First Five-Year Plan like a rabbit out of a hat in order to solve a difficult and immediate problem of Russian internal policy—the relation between workers and peasants—the fact remains that the plan laid the firm foundation of large-scale modern industry in Russia. As far back as the Fourteenth Party Congress in December, 1925, Stalin said that the Party was “confronted with the problem of converting Russia into an industrial country, economically independent of capitalist countries.” This could be done and must be done, he said; it was the cardinal task of the Party to fight for industrialization, and added: “The conversion of our country from a [mainly] agrarian into an industrial country, able to produce the machinery it needs by its own efforts—that is the essence, the basis of our general line.”

In quoting this passage, the *Official History of the Communist Party*, now known to have been written by Stalin and included in his *Collected Works*, says: “The industrialization of the country would ensure its economic independence, strengthen its power of defence and create the conditions for the victory of socialism in the U.S.S.R.”

During the next two years the energies of the Communist Party leaders were largely occupied by their internal controversy, which was perhaps decided, though not ended, by Stalin's victory over the Trotsky group in December, 1927. This gave Stalin a freer hand and he was able to apply the 1925 programme of all-out industrialization as an imperative means to Soviet independence of the West and to the success of socialism.

The opposition to Stalin had wanted to build Russian industry slowly and gradually, almost as a by-product from the profits of agriculture. But at that time the profits, or surplus for export, of agriculture, were almost wholly provided by the richer peasants, the kulaks, who represented private enterprise, petty capitalism, anything you care to call it save socialism. So in swinging the Party towards rapid and all-out industrialization Stalin was forced willy-nilly to undertake—or deliberately undertook—the fight against the kulaks, the struggle for collectivization which convulsed Russia from 1929 to 1933. The one decision inevitably implied the other, because the questions of industrialization and rural socialism (collectivization) were closely intertwined. If the Party had accepted the opposition thesis that industry should be built gradually from the proceeds of the kulak-produced surplus, it followed that the kulaks should be tolerated if not encouraged. Indeed, Bukharin, who had been one of Lenin's intimate friends and had written a book called *The ABC of Communism* with Lenin's full approval, actually went so far in a *Pravda* editorial as to utter the slogan to the peasant, "Enrich yourselves," a direct encouragement to the kulak, anti-socialist spirit. Stalin saw the problem as a whole and in the Party Congress of December, 1927, carried it through as a whole. He argued that the basic Soviet purpose was to socialize Russia and that this purpose could never be achieved until the most important part of Russian economy—at that time agriculture—was socialized. On the other hand

agriculture could never be socialized until it was mechanized and modernized, which could not be done until Russia itself was able to supply the means of mechanization, that is, tractors and other agricultural machines. Therefore, said Stalin, the two problems were in reality a single problem.

Flushed with victory over Trotsky and Co., Stalin had small difficulty in persuading the Congress to vote the decision that industrialization must be rushed at all costs, and to accept also the corollary of that decision, that the socializing of the villages should be undertaken as soon as possible.

Future historians may well declare that Stalin's greatest achievement, greater even than his conduct of the war to a victorious end, was his conquest of the Russian villages for socialism. It was indeed a long and cruel struggle, almost as costly in human suffering and actual loss of life as a foreign war. Stalin's contemporaries, whether in Russia or abroad, certainly regarded it as a major struggle and we have his own words in the *History of the Party*: "This was a *profound revolution*, a leap from an old qualitative state of society to a new qualitative state, *equivalent in its consequences to the Revolution of 1917*." As far as foreigners were concerned, the verdict was savagely hostile to Stalin. He was accused of causing the deaths, by his "man-made famine," of millions of Russian peasants and of tearing from their homes another million men, women, and children to die in misery in the labour camps of Siberia and Central Asia. One might almost say that the foreign view of Stalin as a cruel Asiatic despot and the view of Russia as a police-state date from those years, 1928-33.

Before attempting to decide the pros and cons of this vastly debatable question, it is necessary to make a brief review of Russian agriculture in the year 1928. The blunt, and to the Bolsheviks unpleasant, fact was that the Soviet Revolution had destroyed the power of the landlords and the old Czarist regime in the Russian country-



side, but had done little or nothing to make the villages socialist in any sense of the word. The big and economically profitable farms of the former landlords, which provided most of Russia's large grain export prior to World War I, had been broken up into millions of small holdings. In 1928 it was estimated that there were some twenty-five million peasant "farms" in Russia with an average size of only ten or eleven acres apiece. Almost all those farms were managed far less efficiently as far as methods—that is, the use of fertilizers, crop rotation, and machinery—were concerned, than the big farms of the landlords. True, the total crop was larger than pre-war, but only a third as much grain was available as a marketable surplus to feed the urban centres and provide for export. This meant, of course, that the peasants, by and large, were living better than they had lived before but the national economy was in a worse position. As for socialism, no more than 2 or 3 per cent of the peasants belonged to collective or communal farms. Indeed, almost all of the aforesaid marketable surplus was provided by the kulaks, who would hardly be called farmers in America as their average holding was much less than a hundred acres. But they were prosperous enough to employ labour and produce a surplus over their own needs. Far from being socialist, they were stubbornly individualistic and reactionary.

Lenin fully understood this state of affairs but there wasn't much he could do about it, although he perceived the remedy. He said on one occasion that a hundred thousand tractors would spell socialism in the villages, by which he meant that agriculture could be socialized by mechanization. In 1928 Stalin set out to build a powerful native Russian heavy industry through the First Five-Year Plan, which actually provided, in four or five years, a Russian tractor fleet of a quarter of a million machines, so that the time seemed ripe to begin the conversion of agriculture from the primitive individualistic small-

holding system to socialized collectivism on a modern and mechanized basis.

At this juncture it almost seemed that Stalin was committing an error, from the viewpoint of Marxist-Leninist dialectics. He said, as quoted earlier, that the change he contemplated and undertook in village economy, was "a profound revolution . . . equivalent in its consequences to the Revolution of 1917." It was one of the cardinal Bolshevik (Marxist-Leninist) tenets that *revolution* must be a swift and sweeping process, a sharp and violent upheaval, which could not be done gradually. The gradual progress towards socialism by legal electoral methods was condemned and despised by the Bolsheviks as "reformism," a pussyfooting substitute for decisive action which ignored the basic principles of class struggle and the realism on which Marxists prided themselves. Yet the First Five-Year Plan, introduced by Stalin on October 1, 1928, assumed that this rural revolution, as Stalin himself had called it, could be brought about gradually over a period not of five years, but of fifteen or twenty years.

Actually, the first Five-Year Plan proposed that about one-third of the peasant holdings should be collectivized by October, 1933. Such a view was not only an example of the "reformist heresy" which the Bolsheviks rejected but it ignored another of their basic tenets, that no possessing or dominating class or group will ever abandon its position and privileges without a fight. The kulaks on this occasion proved the force of this tenet. They had acquired a favoured position in the villages as the producers of the marketable surplus of food, and whether the Bolsheviks liked it or not, or intended it or not, they soon found themselves engaged in a battle to the death with them. It was no longer a question of utilizing the kulaks and slowly replacing the kulaks by the collective-farm system, but of "eliminating the kulaks as a class" no less harshly and completely than the former property-owners had been eliminated by the Revolution of 1917.

By the spring of 1930 the fat was in the fire with a vengeance. To call it civil war is doubtless an exaggeration, but there was tumult and fighting all over Russia. Communist pressure upon the kulaks was met by murder and arson, and it became clear that the issue had to be fought out and fought out quickly. The Communists had seized the peasant bull by the tail and couldn't let it go. They had to throw it and hog-tie it and brand it, or be defeated.

In March, 1930, Stalin tried to pour oil on troubled waters by issuing his article, "Dizziness from Success," vigorously attacking high-handed Communist methods of dragooning the peasants into collective farms. This and subsequent statements by him and decrees by the Central Committee of the Party modified and corrected the worst abuses of the Communist course, but matters had gone too far for any truce or compromise. Once again it was a case of Lenin's famous "*Kto kovo?*" ("Who beats whom?")—in short, a fight to the finish. The result was that by the end of 1932, 90 per cent of the cultivated area was socialized—that is, in the hands of collective or State farms.

The Bolsheviks won their victory by ruthless direct action against the kulaks, but in part, too, by appealing to the interests of the poorer peasants, who naturally were willing to share up the animals, land, property, and other belongings of the kulaks, and to free themselves from the bonds of debt in which they were held by the kulaks. In all the struggle there was an elusive central body, called the "middle peasants," who sometimes were the object of Bolshevik pressure and at other times of Bolshevik cajolery. In theory the middle peasant was able to support himself, although except in the most favourable climatic conditions he rarely produced a marketable surplus. On the other hand, he was not rich enough to lend money or exploit his poorer brethren. Be that as it may, the end of 1932 saw collective farming

established in Russia but saw also that most of the new collectives were run by the poorer peasants upon whose greed and numbers the Bolsheviks had relied for support against the kulaks. Socialism had triumphed and the kulaks were eliminated as a class, deprived of their belongings and driven into exile, but two other factors now came into play. First, that like them or not, the kulaks had been the best and most efficient farmers in their communities; second, that it is one thing to form a collective-farm unit and another to succeed in collective work.

It was easy for Soviet leaders to hope and say that a collective farm with tractors and fertilizers and modern methods of all kinds would be more efficient than the kulak system and bring greater production and prosperity to the village, but the immediate consequence of the "Village War" and the establishment of collective farms under the management of the poorer peasants was a near catastrophe for Russia. Almost all the collective farms established in 1931 and 1932 were shockingly mismanaged. What else could be expected when every village in Russia had been the scene of bitter internal strife, when animals had been slaughtered or allowed to die through incompetence, and grain had been buried, and barns and houses burned? It has been estimated that livestock dropped by 50 per cent during those tragic years, and there were large areas, as I saw with my own eyes in the North Caucasus in 1933, where miles of weeds and desolation replaced the former grainfields.

In that summer I drove nearly two hundred miles across country between Rostov and Krasnodar through land that was lost to the weeds and through villages that were empty, yet even there I found a striking contrast. There was one communal farm in the south which had been established not long after the Civil War and remained under much the same management. It was an oasis of happiness and plenty in a stricken land. The

people and their animals were plump and contented. Every family had two or three rooms. There were a day-nursery with screened windows and beds for the children, a communal restaurant which served excellent food neatly and cheaply, a fish pond, a pig and poultry farm, even a novel and profitable cultivation of castor-oil plants as lubricant for aeroplanes. This little community compared favourably with any farming outfit in the West. They weren't, of course, so wealthy as American farmers, but they had overcome the age-old enemies of the Russian peasant—hunger, insecurity, ignorance, and disease, and were all busy as beavers, eager and full of hope.

At that time, however, such success was a rare exception, although it showed what could be, and was later, accomplished. Whatever Stalin's apologists may say, 1932 was a year of famine in Russia, with all the signs of peasant distress which I had seen in 1921; the mass migration of destitute peasants from the countryside to the towns and cities; epidemics of typhus and other diseases of malnutrition; great influx of beggars into Moscow and Leningrad.

How far this famine was "man-made" in the sense that Stalin and his Government deliberately provoked it by wholesale collectivization is another story. Evidence gathered on the spot showed that the lack of efficiency of the peasants themselves was partly to blame, that in some regions crop prospects were bright enough before the harvest but that harvesting was shockingly mismanaged; vast quantities of grain were hidden or simply wasted, because collection and distribution of foodstuffs disintegrated in the prevailing chaos. On the other hand, it can fairly be argued that the authorities were responsible because they had not foreseen the muddle and mess and taken steps beforehand to correct it. The proof of this is that things took a marked turn for the better in the following year, when the Communist Party set its hand, almost literally, to the plough.

From the beginning of 1933, "political sections," each composed of three veteran Communists, were attached to the machine and tractor stations, which were thoroughly overhauled and reorganized. Now at last measures were taken that should have been taken before to organize the collective farms and see that they were properly run. In this work, the machine and tractor stations were perhaps the most important single factor. First formed in 1929, they were depots of government-owned agricultural machinery manned by city-trained mechanics, which served the collective farms of the surrounding countryside. At first, of course, their number was very small, but by 1933 there were enough of them to supply most of the traction and other machinery needed by the farms, especially needed at that time because of the heavy mortality in draught animals during the previous years. The political sections were responsible directly to the Central Committee of the Party in Moscow, which meant they could overrule local authority, Communist and non-Communist, and so for the first time the collective farms as a whole had the benefit of skilled advice and supervision. Yet it is interesting to note that Stalin did directly and specifically assume responsibility for what had occurred. In a speech of January 11, 1933, to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, he said: "Why blame the peasants? . . . For *we* are at the helm; *we* are in command of the instruments of the State; it is *our* mission to lead the collective farms; and *we* must bear the whole of the responsibility for the work in the rural districts."

## *Chapter Eight*

# COLLECTIVISM—THE POLITBURO'S PATH TO POWER

**T**o sum up the collective-farm campaign it may be said that the war for socialism versus individualism was actually won in the year 1930, but that lack of foresight and preparation for "peace" after victory proved almost as disastrous as the effects of the war itself. (We have seen something very similar in Europe since V.E. Day, 1945.) It was not until 1933 that the collective-farm system was put on a reasoned and practical basis. From then on progress was rapid, and with a definite, observable increase in the ratio of good to bad farms.

As Stalin himself once pointed out, the question of management was paramount. There would be two collective farms side by side, founded at the same time, with conditions in every way similar. Yet one would be a success, the other a failure. By 1935 half the collectives were fair to good, the other half poor to bad. By 1937 six out of ten were good, two more were fair, one was poor, and only one was bad. In that year the weather was unusually fine and the crop of all farm produce, from grain to flax, cotton, and tobacco, was the greatest in Russian history. By 1941 it could fairly be said that nine out of ten collective farms were quite well managed, and that a farm that was poorly managed for whatever cause was almost certain to have that cause examined and eliminated.

In retrospect, it is easy to see how and why the early muddle occurred and what an enormous mass of detail

and minute adjustment in wage scales and so forth was necessary—which, of course, took time and experience. In this respect, one of the most important levers towards improvement was a method which would seem to contradict the whole principle of collective or socialist farms—a system of payment to the individual by results in terms of skill and production. For example, the driver of a harvester combine received as much as eight times the wage of a night watchman for an equivalent period of work. This system of payment by results for each individual in accordance with his output holds good throughout Soviet Russia and is the means by which that country has restored and maintains the incentive which champions of private enterprise in the United States and elsewhere believe to be impossible under socialism.

These same years, 1933–7, brought a corresponding expansion and improvement in industry and a steady and universal rise in living standards. To illustrate the change, I should like to quote from William Mandel. In his *A Guide to the Soviet Union* (used as a textbook at Yale and Stanford Universities), William Mandel has described the change:

“For the first time, a portion of the country’s precious supply of metal, machines and skilled labour was set aside to manufacture mechanical consumers’ goods. The production of phonographs rose from 58,000 in 1932 to 1,500,000 in 1937. Bicycle production increased fourfold, pianos eightfold, radios and cameras fifteen times. A blanket cut in the prices of consumers’ goods, ranging from five to fifteen per cent, had the effect of a further general wage increase.

“The years 1935 to 1937 also saw increased remuneration for intellectual service, a change from the preceding years, when all available incentive funds had had to go to industrial workers and engineers. Teachers got a general salary increase in 1936 and again the next year. At the end of 1937 university personnel got a similar



nationwide raise, and were shifted from a per-hour basis back to fixed salaries pegged to a five-hour day. . . .

"In terms of foodstuffs: city people ate two and a half times as much butter in 1937 as five years earlier. They consumed three and a half times as much pork, four times as many sausages, three times as much wheat bread, and nearly four times as many fruits and berries. By comparison with 1913, the best year under the Tsars, the production in 1938 of sausages and smoked meats was six and a half times as high. The catch of fish, a basic item in the Russian diet, rose 50 per cent from 1913. The output of bread and bakery products had doubled, as had that of sugar, while confectionary output multiplied fifteen times over. . . .

"The peasant gained equally with the worker. As compared with Tsarist times he ate a fourth more bread and cereal products in 1938, and 80 per cent more potatoes. He consumed 80 per cent more meat and fats, 50 per cent more milk and milk products, 50 per cent more vegetables and fruits, four times as many eggs. . . .

"The farmer's working day had been fifteen or sixteen hours during the busy summer months. The introduction of modern machinery and a division of labour reduced it to nine hours and forty minutes, on the average, in 1938."

With regard to recreational and similar activities, Mr. Mandel provides the following information:

"The most impressive system of adult education, linked with recreation, is that conducted by the trade unions for their 27,000,000 members. Each plant or, in large enterprises and offices, each departmental trade union branch, has its Committee for Mass Cultural Work . . . [It organizes] reading and club rooms in workers' dormitories, which are provided with newspapers, magazines, games, musical instruments, radios and travelling libraries. . . .

"Parks of Culture and Rest are the outdoor counterpart of the clubs. There are about 600 throughout the country.

Every town of more than 50,000 has one, and many smaller towns as well. The Maxim Gorky Park of Culture and Rest at Moscow extends for four-and-a-half miles along the banks of the Moscow River—a country estate for Moscow's millions. In the hills, there are week-end cottages, called one-day rest homes. The Gorky Park's attendance on week-days is sixty to seventy thousand; on week-ends, a quarter of a million or more. . . . Moscow has ten other Parks of Culture and Rest, plus twenty-eight more exclusively for children.

"Organized sports are a form of recreation unknown before the revolution except to the wealthy. This was partly due to lack of facilities and partly to lack of time among a population working from sun-up to dark from early childhood; partly, also, to lack of a sports tradition. . . .

"Today not even so sport-loving a people as the Americans take a more active part in athletics. In the summer of 1943, 8,800,000 men and women took part in cross-country runs. The next winter five million participated in cross-country ski races, in which the shortest event was over a two-mile distance. An equal number takes part in the gymnastics contests each spring. . . ."

What this meant to the Russian masses cannot easily be realized by the democracies of the West, who have come to regard good food, education, recreation, and sports as part of their birthright. In Russia in the old days it was just the opposite, and all these things were a welcome novelty in the years 1934-8. Those were the years of the treason trials and the Great Purge, upon which foreign attention was concentrated so closely that the real gains in happiness and prosperity were neglected or ignored by the rest of the world. There is no doubt that the Purge in its final stages had an adverse and distressing effect upon the lives of great numbers of Russians, but this was offset by two factors: first, the Russian people were

having a better time than they had ever had before; and, second, they felt they were getting it by their own efforts, that is, it was *their* farms, *their* factories, *their* clubs and schools and recreation centres—in short, their own country.

It may seem that too much space has been devoted here to the collective-farm question and to Stalin's personal part in the struggle. However, aside from his own statements as to its importance, it is probable that the very existence of socialism in Russia depended upon the establishment of a collectivized, i.e., socialized, agriculture. And the fact that four years did elapse between 1937, when one might say the success of collectivization was assured, and the German invasion in 1941, gave the Russian villages a breathing space that was of the greatest value to the moral and physical strength of their resistance to the enemy.

It is perhaps no coincidence that the power and authority of the Politburo reached its peak during this period of international tension and anxiety. The Politburo elected at the Seventeenth Party Congress in January, 1934, was fully controlled by Stalin and his closest associates: Kirov, Molotov, Voroshilov, Kaganovich, Kalinin, Kuibyshev, Orjonikidze, Andreyev, and Mikoyan as a candidate member. In that year, Kirov was assassinated and Kuibyshev and Orjonikidze later died, but the Stalinist core had complete and unchallenged dominance.

The murder of Kirov set off the wave of treason trials which culminated in the Great Purge of 1936–8 by which two-thirds of the leading Communists in Russia were removed from public life either by expulsion from the Party or by execution. This applied to every branch of national affairs: the Central Committee of the Party; the Government, central and local; the diplomatic corps and the armed services; all commercial, industrial, and other organizations. Everywhere the two-thirds ratio was maintained without mercy or favour.

In such circumstances it was inevitable that there must have been considerable periods of time when the Politburo was the sole functioning authority in Russia, arbitrary and supreme, because it alone rode safe above the tempest and had confidence to act. Then indeed there arose in full measure the dictatorship of Stalin and the Politburo which his foreign critics and opponents in the Communist Party had claimed to see before. Yet, significantly, 1936 was the year chosen for the introduction of a new constitution, and the first general election under it was held in 1937. Thus, by one of the paradoxes so frequent in Russia, authority was wholly centralized and concentrated at the top of the Soviet pyramid while its base was enormously extended at the bottom. Foreigners might be convinced that the benefits and pledges of the constitution were illusory and existed only on paper, and that the peoples of Russia were cowed and browbeaten under the rifles of the G.P.U., but the average peasant and worker, the members of the former "subject races" in Central Asia and the Caucasus, the little men and especially women (whose economic and political status was reaffirmed and guaranteed) regarded it differently. For the most part they had faith in their new constitution.

It is a purely academic question to wonder whether the supreme and unlimited authority which the Politburo had now acquired would have diminished or been partially transferred to organs of government if the international situation had improved, because, instead of improving, the path led straight to war, and in wartime even the Western democracies were forced to concentrate power in the fewest number of hands. The only difference in Russia was that Stalin already had the possession of powers conferred upon President Roosevelt and Winston Churchill by the emergency of war.

During the war Stalin assumed the direct leadership of Government. He became Premier in May, 1941, on the eve of hostilities, succeeding Molotov, and was, of course,

Chairman of the "Inner War Cabinet," the State Committee of Defence, whose five members all belonged to the Politburo. Also, throughout the conflict he held the post of Defence Minister, and as Generalissimo took an active part in the strategy and conduct of Red Army operations. Stalin already had some military experience, and his personal share in the Civil War that followed the Revolution was much greater than was realized abroad at the time. He organized the defence of Tsaritsyn, later called Stalingrad, at a most critical period, and forced through the wise decision to attack the White General Denikin through the Ukraine rather than through the Cossack country, as Trotsky advocated. One of his biographers reports that he maintained and improved his military knowledge in the pre-World War II years by attending the lectures of the then Chief of Staff, General Shaposhnikov.

On July 3, 1941, in a radio speech, his first public address in two years, Stalin declared that the German armies were not invincible and that Russia would fight on to victory. He announced the "scorched-earth" policy and the preparations for guerrilla warfare and added that the Soviet war aim was not only to eliminate the danger hanging over Russia, but to free the peoples of Europe enslaved by German fascism. He concluded: "Our war for the freedom of our country will merge with the struggles of the peoples of Europe and America for their independence and for democratic liberties. It will be a united front of peoples standing for freedom against enslavement and threats of enslavement." In speeches of November 6 and 7, 1941, he discussed the reasons for the failure of the German Blitzkrieg and stated his conviction that Germany was bound to lose the war. In 1943, he made important statements in the realm of foreign affairs, on the Polish situation and on the dissolution of the Comintern. In his speech at the November anniversary celebration Stalin made the following pledges:

(a) to free all the nations conquered by the Nazis, (b) to grant the liberated peoples of Europe full right and freedom to decide their own form of government, (c) to punish all war criminals, (d) to take steps to preclude any new aggression by Germany after it should be defeated, and (e) to create a system of mutual collaboration among the peoples of Europe. A year later he spoke more specifically about forming a new international organization to punish the war culprits, avert aggression, and further the task of post-war reconstruction and peace.

Reports published since the end of the war showed that Stalin visited all sections of the front in his armoured train and took a personal hand in the preparation of all major actions. Marshal Rokossovsky, the victor of Stalingrad, which was the decisive battle and turning-point of the Russo-German war, records that Stalin amended his (Rokossovsky's) plan for launching one major and one supplementary attack on the army of von Paulus, in favour of an all-out double attack which resulted in the surrender of the German Marshal and his army, and the repulse of the army of von Mannstein, who was ordered to relieve his colleague.

In his final report on the war, in October, 1945, General Marshall, United States Chief of Staff, stated: "The refusal of the British and Russian peoples to accept defeat was the great factor in the salvage of our civilization.

"There can be no doubt . . . that the heroic stand of the British and Soviet peoples saved the United States a war on her own soil. The crisis had come and passed at Stalingrad . . . before this nation was able to gather sufficient resources to participate in the fight in a determining manner."

Winston Churchill had previously made a similar statement to Parliament, on August 2, 1944: "It is the Russian Army which has done the main work of ripping the guts out of the German Army."

In the same speech he paid a glowing personal tribute

to Marshal Stalin. For most of their lives Stalin and Churchill had been at daggers drawn, but one thing they shared in common: neither ever lost heart in the darkest days of defeat or ever failed to lead and inspire their countrymen by their acts and words.

## *Chapter Nine*

# STALIN AND THE POLITBURO— MOLOTOV

THE foregoing chapters have shown how under pressure of the war that was coming and as a result of his total victory over all forms of internal opposition, Stalin was firmly established as dictator of the U.S.S.R., and the ascendancy of his executive instrument, the Politburo, was clearly defined. Yet even today, after the demands of that war when it came and the sweeping victory by which it ended have further strengthened, if further strength was needed, the high-level structure of the Soviet system, with Stalin at the top and the Politburo under him in control of both the Government and the Communist Party—today, despite all that, some Western leaders do not understand the facts of Russian life.

In June, 1948, President Truman made the statement in a speech on his western tour that he liked Stalin, whom he had met at Potsdam, and had confidence in his good will, but that unfortunately he was the prisoner of the Politburo, which could not be trusted to keep agreements. The President did not say whether he produced this verdict from his own consciousness or from information given him by his advisers on foreign affairs. In either case it is contrary to the facts.

Since 1930 Stalin has held 90 per cent of the supreme authority in Russia, and the rest of the Politburo not more than 10 per cent. There is a story in Homer about Zeus, the father of gods and men, intervening in some wrangle on Mount Olympus between the other gods who



were partisans of Greece and Troy respectively. When one of them questioned his authority, he became cross and said: "Don't talk to me like that. If all of you hung on a chain, and I held the other end, and you tried to pull me down, you wouldn't budge me an inch. But if I wished to pull you up, I'd do it with one hand." That's how it is with Stalin, in terms of actual power, but according to all accounts he is far from domineering in dealing with his colleagues.

Lenin, we are told, used to say: "Here is what I think our policy should be. If anyone has suggestions to offer or can make any improvements, I am willing to listen. Otherwise, let us consider my plan adopted." Stalin takes a different line. He is more inclined to begin, if the subject under discussion concerns foreign affairs: "I should like to hear from Molotov." Then, he might continue, "Now, what does Voroshilov think on the military aspects of this subject?" and later he would ask Kaganovich about the matter in relation to industry and transportation.

Gradually he will get a composite opinion from the Politburo, probably "leading" the discussion along the lines he desires, but not appearing to lay down the law, until the final conclusion is reached. Thus, superficially at least, he seems to act as a chairman of a board, or arbiter, rather than as the boss.

In making this distinction between the methods of Lenin and Stalin, one thing must always be remembered. Lenin knew that his Politburo was composed of potentially hostile elements, full of cabals and rivalries. Stalin and Trotsky were at loggerheads from the outset; Kamenev and Zinoviev generally played together in an often shifty game and were not always to be relied upon. Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomskey represented another element of discord. Lenin therefore found it necessary to lay down the law and take a strong line with what he once described as "this difficult team that I drive."

In Stalin's case, his senior colleagues, Molotov and Voroshilov, have been most closely associated with him as partners, friends, and henchmen, for more than thirty years, since the old underground days in Russia, during the Revolution and Civil War, and in all the vicissitudes and conflicts that followed against enemies at home and abroad. The same thing can be said of all the rest, with the only difference that some of the juniors have had a much shorter period of association with their chief. But all the Politburo members, without exception, have always been Stalin's men throughout their careers. They were hand-picked by Stalin by virtue of his commanding position as Party Secretary. Typical of the younger men are Andreyev—whom he appointed to a high post in the Secretariat at the early age of twenty-nine—and Malenkov. Well might Trotsky say, bitterly, in the hour of Stalin's first triumphs, that the Dictatorship of the Proletariat had been replaced by a Dictatorship of the Secretariat.

To make a familiar comparison, the Politburo is like a first-class football team, say Arsenal or Manchester United, and Stalin is their manager and coach. Each member of the team has his specific position, and knows what to do in any team play, but the team as a whole depends upon the coach, relies upon him, and looks to him for their leadership and inspiration—with the significant difference that Arsenal's manager sits on the sidelines, whereas Stalin, in addition to coaching the team, plays centre-forward as well.

Once this is understood, it is interesting to consider the characters and personalities of Stalin's team, as follows, in order of seniority on the Politburo:

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Admission</i>	<i>Age at that Time</i>
Stalin	1917	38
Molotov	1925	35
Voroshilov	1926	45
Kaganovich	1930	37

<i>Name</i>	<i>Date of Admission</i>	<i>Age at that Time</i>
Andreyev	1931	36
Mikoyan	1935	40
Zhdanov (died September, 1948)	1939	43
Khrushchev	1939	45
Malenkov	1946	45
Beria	1946	47
Voznesensky	1947	43

*Candidates*

Shvernik	1939	51
Bulganin	1948	53
Kosygin	1948	43

## MOLOTOV

Next to Stalin, Molotov is better known abroad than any of the other Bolshevik leaders. About him there was a story current and believed in Moscow twenty-five years ago. It was said that Stalin suggested to Lenin that Molotov, as an old and trusted member of the Party and one of the founders of *Pravda*, the Party newspaper, should be a member of the Central Committee of the Party. Lenin squinted his Tartar eyes and said: "Why that one?"

Stalin repeated Molotov's services, and Lenin said: "Well, if you like. But you know what I think of him: he's the best filing clerk in Russia." In other words, a mediocrity.

The story is almost certainly apocryphal. To begin with, if Lenin had really thought Molotov was only a filing clerk, neither Stalin nor anyone else would have induced him to appoint him to the Central Committee. Again, Lenin undoubtedly knew that Molotov at the age of fifteen, son of fairly prosperous bourgeois parents, threw himself head over heels into the revolutionary movement of 1905 after the Russo-Japanese War, that

he joined the Bolshevik Party, and when he was still at High School received from the Czarist police a two-year sentence of exile. This was hardly the record of a mediocre "filing clerk."

As a matter of fact, Lenin himself, while in exile abroad, had appointed Molotov to the "Russian Bureau" in 1916 at the age of twenty-six. Since this Bureau was the chief Bolshevik organization on Russian soil during these years of depression, the appointment carried high rank in Party circles. It is also a fact that Molotov, on entering the Central Committee of the Party in 1921, was promptly named its Responsible Secretary, which was quite definite proof of the esteem in which he was held.

None the less, prior to 1925, when Molotov became a full member of the Politburo, his name was little known among well-informed foreigners in Moscow itself. Such people as had heard of him seemed to regard him as a worthy, plugging fellow, who could be trusted but who would never set the Thames on fire. Nevertheless, in 1945, at the formal victory celebration in the Kremlin, it was to Molotov and to him alone that Stalin raised his glass in personal tribute.

This seeming paradox can be explained in two ways. First, Molotov is a plodder, a man of slow though positive thoughts, and an uninspiring speaker. He looks dull, thick-set, and square-faced, without fire of tone or gesture. But there are two sorts of plodders. One just plods along because he can do no better, condemned by his own limitations to go on plodding. The other type is different, a man who thinks slowly and acts with caution, who understands his own limitations and therefore knows how to overcome them, a man who can grow by experience. His record indicates that Molotov is such a man.

Molotov seems to belong to that type of men who do move slowly, and perhaps think slowly, but who are steadfast and conscientious, and when placed in an important position, can rise to meet the responsibilities

of their rank. American business executives know that one of the surest tests of a man's true value is to give him a responsible position. If he is weak, it breaks him: if he is strong, it makes him. He grows with the position and in the position until he has risen high above his former self. This is especially true, in big business or in armies or anywhere, when men of relative mediocrity are not only given responsible posts but are also associated with a strong and remarkable leader, whose example they can follow, and from whose conduct they can learn. Whatever can be said about Molotov, there is no doubt that his stature has grown with the possession and exercise of power under Stalin's guidance.

After his first arrest in 1909, Molotov's youth was typical of the Bolshevik underground, a series of arrests (five) and escapes. In 1909, after two months' imprisonment, he was exiled to Vologda in northern European Russia, where he busied himself in organizing railroad workers, which might seem surprising for a young student-intellectual, but was characteristic of Bolshevik methods. Later, he lived in St. Petersburg, in the Viborg quarter, a working-class section with strong revolutionary traditions.

I am unable to find just when or why he assumed the name Molotov (*molot* means hammer in Russian), but it is not unlikely that it began as a nickname, "because it suited him" as Stalin said about himself; since the man is a plugger as well as a plodder, and hammers away till he achieves his point . . . or exhausts his opponents.

In 1916-17 Molotov had a stroke of luck in that he was one of the few prominent Bolsheviks at liberty in European Russia—Lenin, for instance, was still in Switzerland, Stalin far north of the Urals, Trotsky in America—and therefore was called upon to assume responsibilities heavy for his age and standing in the Party. As always, he did an efficient job in running the Party newspaper, *Pravda*, on which he had risen to be co-editor.

But then and for many years later, Molotov did not hold spectacular posts that brought him into public view. He was primarily a Party business executive, apt at building up a machine and starting it moving smoothly. For instance, in 1918, after the decrees to nationalize industry had been issued, Molotov was put in charge of the nationalization programme in north-western Russia, including Petrograd. In 1919, after the expulsion of the White commander Kolchak and his Czech allies from the Volga region, Molotov was sent there to take charge of reconstruction. In the following year he had a similar but more important post in the Donets Basin in the Ukraine, the centre of the coal and metallurgical industries, after the Whites had been defeated there.

In all these positions he won little kudos or public acclaim. At that time, too, the "Western Exiles" were paramount in Bolshevik affairs and became known abroad, if only for the reason that they had contacts with such foreign correspondents and diplomats as remained in Russia. The present ruling group, Stalin, Molotov, Voroshilov and Co., were unacquainted with foreigners, and their influence in the Party did not seem to outsiders to be so great as it undoubtedly was. Nevertheless, Molotov was made a member of the Central Committee and its Responsible Secretary in 1921, which brought him, like Zhdanov and Malenkov many years later, into the charmed circle of the Secretariat, through which Stalin rose to victory. Prior to that, from November, 1920, Molotov had been Secretary of the Communist Party in the Ukraine. Finally, he was admitted to the Politburo as a candidate member in 1921 at the early age of thirty-one, younger than anyone before or since.

The time of Molotov's admission into the Politburo was the period of the New Economic Policy, when the Communist Party was in definite, though temporary, retreat, and was further discouraged by the severe and finally mortal illness of Lenin. Molotov worked in the

Secretariat under Stalin, who was appointed General Secretary at the beginning of 1922, and ostensibly busied himself with the direction of Party personnel. In reality he was helping to construct the Stalinist machine inside the Party. Whatever the outer world may have failed to know about the gravity of Lenin's illness, Stalin must have had little doubts on the subject and was far too cautious and long-sighted not to have been preparing for the coming struggle for power. Stalin, however, had spent the three years before 1917 in a remote district just south of the Arctic Circle, while Molotov was in close touch with the various Bolshevik groups in western Russia. Now he must have been invaluable to his chief in appointing to key positions men they could rely upon.

Lenin's death, as many foreign observers noted at the time, produced a short period of truce in what already loomed as a contest for power within the Party. In December of the previous year (1923), Trotsky had voiced a powerful criticism of the policies of the Central Committee, which was regarded in Moscow as a bid for future leadership. The Committee rallied, and a Party Conference in that year refuted Trotsky's attack and accused him of opposition tactics. But Trotsky's blow had been a shrewd one.

After Lenin's death, in January, 1924, a flood of new members was brought into the Communist Party, called the "Lenin Enrolment," three hundred thousand of them or more, added to the previous membership of less than half a million. There is no doubt that most of them were picked by the Central Secretariat, through its representatives in the towns, villages, and factories, to support the Stalinist programme, with the result that the Thirteenth Party Congress, in May, 1924, inflicted a severe defeat upon Trotsky. He had just declared that Stalin was trying to convert the Dictatorship of the Proletariat into a Dictatorship of the Secretariat, to which Stalin retorted: "Unless Trotskyism is defeated, it will

be impossible to change present-day Russia [i.e. the Russia of the New Economic Policy, which fostered petty capitalism in the cities and kulak individualism in the villages] into socialist Russia."

From then onwards, it was clear that the battle for power was engaged, but in the meantime Molotov did yeoman service in winning the control of the Party masses which proved the decisive factor in the long-drawn conflict. In December, 1925, he was made a full member of the Politburo and that same month was sent with Kirov and Voroshilov to handle the revolt of Zinoviev and the Leningrad Party against Stalin and the Central Committee. I was in Moscow at the time and remember the dismay in high Party circles which was caused by the news that Zinoviev had joined the Trotskyite opposition. The trio (*troika*, the Russians call it), Kirov, Molotov, and Voroshilov, took prompt and high-handed measures in the city where Zinoviev had been undisputed boss, and, as had happened before, Zinoviev failed to meet the challenge. Fighting on his home grounds, he might have beaten them, but he weakened, and without knowing it signed his own death warrant.

This activity put Molotov out in the open as one of Stalin's chief henchmen in the intra-Party controversy, whose first phase ended with the expulsion of Trotsky and his friends from the Party in the winter of 1927. There followed a second, and in a way more critical, phase, when Stalin decided to go all out for industrialization and the socialization of agriculture. That was in the summer of 1928, when they were preparing the First Five-Year Plan, which began in October of that year. In an earlier chapter I have laid great stress upon this double programme for industry and agriculture, which, in my opinion, was Stalin's hardest battle and his major contribution to the establishment in Russia of a socialist state. It is significant that the first blow in the First Five-Year Plan campaign was the appointment of Molotov



to the key position of Moscow Party Secretary in place of Uglanov. Uglanov belonged to the Rykov-Bukharin school of thought, which believed that Russia should be industrialized gradually, through the proceeds of the sale of kulak grain, which in turn implied a continuance of individualism versus socialism in the villages. Molotov's appointment was taken by foreign observers in Moscow to mean that Stalin was going all out for his industrial-collectivization programme.

The struggle against Rykov, Bukharin, and Tomsy grew hotter during the next two years, but the first twelve months of the First Five-Year Plan was so successful that Bukharin was forced out of the Politburo in November, 1929, and Rykov and Tomsy were ousted in the following year. In December, 1930, at the early age of forty, Molotov took Rykov's place as Premier (President of the Council of Commissars) and as a member of the Council on Labour and Defence, which was the only governmental (as distinct from Party) body to which Stalin then belonged.

The downfall of the three opposition leaders meant that at last, after seven years of struggle and manœuvre, Stalin had reached his goal, undisputed control of the Politburo. His campaign followed a pattern which has since become familiar in Communist operations outside Russia, notably in Czechoslovakia. It was mainly the use of a solid minority to divide and manœuvre a majority which lacked unity of programme and purpose. Nevertheless, Stalin's game was played so skilfully that he always managed to have a majority in the Central Committee at critical moments against any opponent or group of opponents, although many of them, especially in the early stages, had greater personal popularity than Stalin himself and far outshadowed his associates in public esteem. It was, in short, the old political trick of playing both ends against the middle.

No less important was Stalin's use of his best weapon,

the Secretariat, to replace adversaries in key posts by his own henchmen. But it was a remarkable feat to rid himself in relatively so short a period of such Bolshevik "heroes" as Trotsky, the war lord; Zinoviev, head of the Communist International; Bukharin, Lenin's "closest disciple" and long-time editor of *Pravda*; Tomsy, head of the trade unions; Rykov, head of the Government; and Kamenev, Trotsky's brother-in-law and member of Lenin's first Politburo. Their ultimate fate bore witness to the rancour of the conflict and to Stalin's Georgian memory of the blows and slights he had received. Tomsy is said to have died by his own hand, Trotsky was slain by an assassin, and the other four met death before a firing squad.

To be premier of a great country at the age of forty was a startling achievement for a man described as a plodder, but the truth of it—and the secret of Molotov's success—was that in every step up the ladder, he left behind him the record of a difficult task efficiently performed. In addition, he consistently widened his range through agriculture and the Party controversy, to industry, and then to a growing knowledge of the international field. As Premier his interest was concentrated at first upon the First Five-Year Plan, but I was told in Moscow in 1932 that he was keenly alive to the danger of a Japanese attack upon the maritime provinces of Siberia.

Molotov's first big public speech on foreign affairs was addressed to the All-Union Soviet Congress in January, 1935, shortly after Russia's entry into the League of Nations, when he explained the part Russia was playing and proposed to play in collective security against the rising tide of Nazism. This is interesting, because some years later Molotov was regarded abroad as cold towards the idea of collective security, that is, Franco-British-Russian co-operation against Hitler, and was said to favour the kind of agreement with Hitler which was actually signed in August, 1939.

The Munich Agreement, by which the French and British Governments abandoned Czechoslovakia to Hitler, was a cruel blow to Russian pride and prestige. Although the Soviet leaders had repeatedly declared their willingness to take an active part in the defence of the Czech bastion, Franco-British statesmen turned a deaf ear and the French Foreign Minister, Bonnet, went so far as openly to express his disbelief in Russian promises.

The Russians had long been accustomed to such treatment from the Western powers, as none knew better than their Foreign Commissar, Litvinov, from his experiences at Geneva. At Munich, however, the Russians received no treatment at all, not even as poor relations. They were contemptuously ignored and felt that they, as well as the Czechs, had been sold down the river by Messrs. Chamberlain and Daladier. In addition, they were convinced, rightly or wrongly, that Munich gave Hitler the green light to the appetite he had avowed in an earlier speech at Nuremberg for the rich grain fields and other natural resources of the U.S.S.R. In Russia not long afterwards, I was told that Molotov's indignation at the Munich "betrayal" surpassed that of any of his colleagues.

As the world knows, Hitler's occupation of Prague on March 15, 1939, rudely awoke Chamberlain from his dream of "peace in our time." The British hastily guaranteed the integrity of Poland and made half-hearted attempts to implement it with the assistance of Russia. The British Minister of Overseas Trade, Mr. Hudson, visited Moscow at the end of March, nominally to prepare an extension of the trade between the two countries, but a Russian communiqué stated bluntly on the day of his departure that he had had a long talk with Molotov in which "matters of international importance" were discussed. A month later a Franco-British mission was sent to Moscow but failed to get any result. On May 4 it was unexpectedly announced that Molotov had replaced Litvinov as Commissar of Foreign Affairs.

## *Chapter Ten*

# MOLOTOV AND THE NEW FOREIGN POLICY

THE dismay of French and British diplomats caused by the appointment of Molotov as Commissar of Foreign Affairs was obvious to Moscow observers in the spring of 1939. They knew that Litvinov had been the champion of collective security in the League of Nations, which Hitler had quit in dudgeon three years before. They believed, too, that Molotov was anti-French-British, if not actually pro-German. Nevertheless, in midsummer, they made another attempt to obtain Russian aid for Poland, which was clearly Hitler's next victim, by sending an Anglo-French military mission to Moscow.

Even this eleventh-hour expedient was carried out half-heartedly. The mission took the slow sea route instead of flying to the Soviet capital, and its personnel were men of little distinction in their respective countries. The Russians listened to them coldly, then stated the conditions on which they were willing to give military aid to Poland. The visitors replied that Poland, let alone their own Governments, would never accept such terms. Meanwhile, "commercial" negotiations between the U.S.S.R. and Germany were being conducted in Berlin and Moscow. As in the case of Mr. Hudson's mission the word "commercial" was generally regarded as a cloak for something more important, and few insiders were surprised when, on August 23, Ribbentrop flew to Moscow and signed a pact of non-aggression with the Soviet Union. A week later Hitler's armies crossed the Polish frontier without warning.

In a speech at a special session of the Supreme Soviet (the Russian equivalent to Congress) Molotov explained that the agreement with Germany (which had been preceded by a commercial agreement signed in Berlin on August 18) was no more than a pact of non-aggression, whereas the military negotiations with England and France had aimed at a pact of mutual assistance, tantamount to an alliance. He said:

"These negotiations failed because Poland, which was to be jointly guaranteed by Great Britain, France, and the U.S.S.R., rejected military assistance on the part of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, negotiations showed that Great Britain was not anxious to overcome those objections but on the contrary encouraged them. After this it became clear to us that the negotiations were doomed to failure. When this impasse was reached, we could not but explore other possibilities of ensuring peace and eliminating the danger of war between Germany and the U.S.S.R.

"In the spring of this year, the German Government proposed to resume commercial discussions. . . . Why should we neglect an advantageous economic agreement? . . . Since 1926 the political basis for our relations with Germany had been the Treaty of Neutrality which was prolonged by the present Government of Germany in 1933 and remains in force to this day. When the German Government expressed a desire to improve political relations as well as economic relations, the Soviet Government had no grounds for refusal. The chief importance of the Soviet-German Non-aggression Pact is that the two largest states in Europe have agreed . . . to live in peace with one another, *making narrower thereby the zone of possible military conflicts in Europe.*"<sup>1</sup>

In November, 1940, Molotov made a formal visit to Berlin. As far as has been ascertained, it was his first trip abroad and was also the first time that any Soviet Premier

<sup>1</sup> Italics mine—W.D.

had stepped on foreign soil. (Molotov retained the post of Premier in addition to that of Foreign Commissar.) He stayed there three days, spent six hours in talks with Hitler on various occasions, met Goering, Hess, Ley, Keitel, and Goebbels, and exchanged banquets with the Nazi Foreign Minister von Ribbentrop, to return whose visit to Moscow was the avowed purpose of Molotov's trip. Molotov was accompanied by more than two dozen experts, and his real aim was to thresh out the growing divergencies in German and Russian relations, to maintain them on a peaceful basis, if possible, but in any case to find out all he could about German intentions and policies, especially in the Balkans. It was in this area that the interests of the two nations conflicted, partly as a result of Russia's occupation of Bessarabia in the previous year, which threatened Germany's desire to control the Danube completely; partly through the revival of Russia's traditional concern with the Slav states of Bulgaria and Yugoslavia. The former was being drawn into the German orbit, and the latter seemed to be a probable object of German pressure, or even attack, in the near future.

I remember being vastly impressed by the reception given in Sofia that summer to a Soviet football team, when the whole city turned out to do them honour. I expressed my surprise to a Bulgarian colleague, who replied blandly: "Well, it isn't because they are Bolsheviks or that we have many Communists, but look at the name of this boulevard and the central square beyond it—Boulevard Czar-Liberator, Square of Czar-Liberator—and there is his statue on horseback, Alexander II, who freed us from the Turks. Don't forget that we are Slavs and have always liked the Russians." He paused, and added slowly: "Better than the damned arrogant Germans."

About the same time, in Belgrade, I found a similar spirit, although the then Government, like that of Bulgaria, showed little signs of resistance to Hitler.

Even in Rumania, which had already been forced to accept Russian recovery of Bessarabia, the Foreign Minister, Gafençu, told me that Russian occupation of Izmail on the north bank of the Danube, a historic city where Catherine's great general, Suvarov, once defeated the Turks, was bound to cause friction between the Soviet and Germany.

In any event, despite an optimistic communiqué, Molotov's "good-will" appearance in the German capital did little to relieve the growing tension. It is difficult to estimate how much credence should be given to later statements by Nazi leaders, especially Ribbentrop, that Molotov had put forward a firm demand for the evacuation of German troops from Rumania and Finland, and for the admission of Russian forces to bases commanding the Bosphorus—demands which are said to have caused Hitler to complain of Russia's "continually renewed extortions." It may well be true that Molotov lived up to his name and hammered while he thought the iron was hot. At any rate, he returned home with the conviction that Hitler's failure to bring Britain to her knees would soon bring about a German drive in the Balkans with its corresponding threat to the maintenance of peace with the U.S.S.R.

In the winter of 1940-1, the rift between Russia and Germany grew wider, although it is worth noting that the terms of the commercial treaty by which Russia supplied great quantities of grain, oil, manganese, and cotton in return for German machines and manufactured goods were scrupulously observed. Indeed it is a remarkable fact that even during the earlier period of Soviet-German discord, when Hitler was filling the air with outcry against the sins of "Judeo-Bolshevism," not one of the commercial or credit arrangements between the two countries was ever allowed to lapse. By March, 1941, it was fairly clear that Germany was out for the mastery of Greece and Yugoslavia, if necessary by force of arms, and

in that month, by no mere coincidence, the Japanese Foreign Minister, Matsuoka, travelled through Russia on his way to Berlin and Rome, to confer with his partners in the Axis Pact. He stopped a day or two in Moscow and informed Molotov that Japan was now willing to sign a pact of non-aggression on Soviet terms. Several times before, such a pact had been discussed on Russian initiative, but the Japanese had always proved recalcitrant about certain vexed questions, like the fisheries in Siberian waters and the frontiers between Manchukuo and Russian territory, and between Russian-controlled Outer Mongolia and Japanese-controlled Inner Mongolia.

Russian doubts about Germany inclined Moscow to welcome the proposal and on Matsuoka's return in the second week of April formal negotiations were opened between him and Molotov which speedily led to the signature of a treaty of neutrality. Molotov undoubtedly realized that Japan's "aspirations" in the Pacific were behind Matsuoka's bid and drove a hard bargain not only about the frontiers but in the matter of the fisheries and of the Japanese concessions in the Soviet half of Sakhalin. From the Soviet viewpoint, the treaty was of the utmost importance. A week before it was signed, the pro-German government in Yugoslavia had been overthrown. Russia hastened to recognize the new cabinet, which ventured to defy Germany. In a space of days Yugoslavia was attacked and conquered. It had become obvious that Russia herself was now threatened with German aggression. The treaty with Japan would save Russia from the danger of fighting on her eastern as well as her western frontier.

It was shortly before this that I received some pointers about the imminence of war. To begin with I was one of four correspondents received in an off-the-record talk with British Ambassador Sir Stafford Cripps in early March after his return from a trip to Istanbul, where he had



talked with British Foreign Minister Anthony Eden and Sir John Dill, then British Chief of Staff. Sir Stafford spoke freely and astonished us by saying he was convinced Hitler would invade Russia before the end of June. A few weeks later I crossed Russia, by the Trans-Siberian to Vladivostok, and from mid-Siberia to Chita shared a compartment with a captain in the Russian Frontier Guard, with whom I became quite friendly. Many times during those days I noticed troop trains full of men but without guns or tanks, moving westward, and finally I asked my room-mate whether they were off for Easter leave to the villages and to help with the spring planting, as was often done.

"Not exactly that," he replied with a grin. "You see, we are moving them westward."

I pricked up my ears and told him what Cripps had said, without naming the British Ambassador. He grinned again and said, "Well, it mayn't be exactly in June, but of course it's bound to come . . . and we're taking precautions."

"What about Japan?" I asked. (This was three weeks before the signature of the Neutrality Treaty.)

"*We* can handle them," said the Russian, "we, the Frontier Guard. Didn't we teach them a lesson last year on the Mongol border and another the year before in the fight for Changku-feng?"

In May of the same year I had a long talk with Matsuoka himself in Tokyo, just after his return from the West. He was in the highest feather, and had received the congratulations of his Emperor the day before. I suggested that he had gone surprisingly far to meet Molotov's conditions. He admitted that that was true and with a toothy Japanese smile asserted this was a proof of Japan's great fondness for peace and good will to everyone, even Russians. I need hardly say that he indignantly disavowed another of my suggestions that Japan might be clearing her skirts for future action in the

Pacific. He did, however, admit that Japanese neutrality would be of cardinal value to Russia "should Russia have any difficulty in Europe."

That Russia was pleased with the treaty was shown by the unprecedented send-off given to Matsuoka. Stalin came in person to the station, accompanied by Molotov and Voroshilov, and bade Matsuoka farewell in almost affectionate terms.

Less than two weeks after the signature of the Russo-Japanese treaty, Molotov resigned the premiership and was replaced by Stalin. The official announcement stated that he did so "in view of his repeated statements that it was difficult for him to fulfil the duties of Premier simultaneously with those of Commissar of Foreign Affairs," but everyone understood that Stalin had come forward to take the highest post in Soviet government because of a national emergency . . . the prospect of war.

Perhaps in order to show that the change involved no reflection on Molotov, he was selected to make the first public pronouncement on behalf of the Soviet Government on June 22, 1941, after the Nazi attack. It is significant that he stressed the parallel between Hitler and Napoleon and revived Alexander I's phrase that Russia was engaged in "a great patriotic war."

A year later Molotov was sent on a vitally important visit to England and the United States. In London he signed a Twenty-Years' Treaty of Alliance with Great Britain, by the terms of which both parties pledged themselves not to conclude armistice or peace except by mutual consent. In Washington he obtained an increase of Lend-Lease from the billion dollars fixed in November, 1941, to three billion dollars.

On his return to Moscow, Molotov made a report to a special session of the Soviet Congress. He spoke of the great warmth and friendliness shown him by Roosevelt, Churchill, and other Anglo-American leaders, and laid particular weight on the following points:

1. That the Alliance with Britain provided for joint action against any future aggression by Germany or its allies for the full twenty years of the treaty's life.

2. That it provided for collaboration of both countries in the peace settlement and in the post-war period.

Molotov added: "This collaboration is conceived along the lines of the basic principles of the Atlantic Charter, to which the U.S.S.R. adhered."

3. That the Soviet-American Agreement (signed in Washington on June 11) also provided "for co-ordinated action between the two countries in the post-war period."

4. That the discussions in Washington and London included the question of ensuring peace and security for all democratic nations after the war.

5. That "full understanding was reached with regard to the urgent tasks of creating a second front in Europe in 1942 (as stated in Anglo-Soviet and American-Soviet communiqués).

The optimism Molotov thus expressed was somewhat dashed a few weeks later by Winston Churchill, who came to Moscow in August and said bluntly that a second front in Europe that year was impossible. There was an almost acrimonious exchange between Stalin and Churchill about the diversion of aeroplanes and other war supplies destined for Russia.

It is worth noting that Molotov found time, in 1942 and 1943, to reorganize the production of tanks in Russia, which had been gravely affected by the loss of Kharkov, and the sieges of Leningrad and Stalingrad, where all save one (Cheliabinsk) of the great pre-war tank plants had been located. He succeeded so well that the *Information Bulletin* of the Soviet Embassy at Washington later stated: "During the war the output of the Soviet tank industry surpassed not only that of Germany, but of all European countries occupied by the Germans as well." In 1943, Molotov was awarded the title of Hero of

Socialist Labour, the highest non-military decoration, for his services in this field.

In October, 1943, Molotov acted as host in Moscow to a conference with his American and British colleagues, Messrs. Hull and Eden. This conference marked a high peak, perhaps never later attained, in friendly relations between the three great powers arrayed against Hitler. Molotov had already emphasized the warmth of his reception in London and Washington the previous year, which may have sounded like words to the American and British public, but meant much on the lips of men who were not only "conditioned" to mistrust but also had long experience of being treated with indifference or contumely by the great powers of the West. Now, for the first time, at Moscow, the Soviet Foreign Commissar met the American Secretary of State and the British Foreign Minister on terms of absolute equality. Henceforth, it seemed to the Russians that the war and the peace which would follow was to be run in concert by the Big Three and no others. The French, Chinese, and minor allies would have little voice in future proceedings.

An editorial in *Izvestia*, official mouthpiece of the Soviet Government, published on the eve of the conference, laid peculiar stress on the fact that the U.S.S.R. had lately been admitted on equal terms to Anglo-American politico-military committees in North Africa and Italy, and that Stalin, as well as President Roosevelt and Prime Minister Churchill, had signed a joint declaration approving Italy's entry into the war on the side of the United Nations. This went to prove, *Izvestia* argued, that Russia's principal demand, for full equality with the U.S.A. and Great Britain, had already been granted. The thread of Russian equality runs through the whole text of the communiqués about the conference, issued simultaneously in Washington, Moscow, and London. In addition the subsequent meeting of Roosevelt, Churchill, and Stalin at Teheran a few weeks later con-

firmed and reiterated the principles of equality and co-operation established at Moscow. This may not seem to bulk large in American and British eyes, but to Russians it was essential. Most of the difficulties which afterwards arose between Russia and the Western Allies can be directly attributed to a revival of the old Russian inferiority complex and to Russian fears and suspicions that the West might join or form a coalition against them. That has always been Soviet Russia's greatest bogey and a vital factor in Soviet foreign policy.

The Moscow Conference did much to allay Russian complaints about the failure of the Western Allies to launch a second front in Europe. It also ended Allied fears that Russia would make a separate peace with Germany or decline to continue the war west of the former Russian frontier. Looking backward, it seems fantastic that the Western Allies should ever have thought that the Russians would not push on to outright victory, if only in revenge for the appalling cruelties, devastation, and wholesale looting of which they had been victims. But the gulf which still divided Russia and the West was still great enough for the fear of a separate Russian peace to be felt in Washington and London, a notion that was industriously fostered by Nazi propaganda and its foreign stooges.

The Russians, too, were informed by the same sources that the Anglo-Saxon powers wished nothing more than to see Slav and Teuton fight each other to a standstill, which accounted, said the Nazi propaganda, for the absence of a second front in Europe. But by the mid-summer of 1943, the action of the American and British air forces in Germany was so potent as almost to amount to a second front. The last great German offensive in the Kursk region in the summer of 1943 was defeated by Russian air superiority, due in no small measure to the withdrawal of German planes and anti-aircraft guns to meet the Anglo-American menace in the west. So that

on both counts, two major grievances between Russia and the Western Allies were allayed, if not removed, at the Moscow Conference, and by the subsequent meeting of heads of state at Teheran. This parley went further and laid the foundations for the peace that was to follow the victory now in sight. This was during the relatively simple times of war. It remains for a later chapter to discuss the fading of the promise of a happier future and the collapse of the Big Three settlement of world affairs upon which the Russians had set their hearts.

Perhaps Molotov's part in the San Francisco Conference in April-June, 1945, more properly belongs to a later part of this book, but there are two or three points arising out of it bearing on Molotov's character and career which may be touched on here.

To begin with, it was his first contact with any Western public, and his second with the world press on terms of Western press conferences as distinct from similar gatherings in Moscow. Molotov and the Russian delegation stayed at the St. Francis Hotel in the centre of the city, whereas the Americans and British, and most of the others, enjoyed the view from the Mark Hopkins, the Fairmont, and other hotels on Nob Hill. From the beginning, Molotov was popular with the San Francisco public, and I recall the horror of his G.P.U. guards when admirers, from adults to bobby-soxers, besieged his car and clustered around him, as he walked into the hotel, with requests for his autograph. More than that, his passage through the lobby of the St. Francis was frequently greeted with spontaneous clapping. It was clear that Molotov liked it, genial, smiling, and apparently blind to any personal risk.

All the chiefs of delegations held frequent press conferences attended by scores of correspondents from all over the world. It was generally admitted that Molotov excelled in frankness, snappiness of come-back, directness of reply, and often in readiness of wit. It was suspected that he knew more English than he allowed, and gained

a few vital moments while questions were being translated, but in any case his success was beyond denial.

Gratifying as this may have been to Molotov's *amour-propre* and to Soviet prestige, the first week at San Francisco brought out two factors less welcome to Russian ideas. Right at the outset, they found that the Americans as hosts had expected Stettinius, then Secretary of State, to be permanent chairman throughout. This at once struck the Russians as a variant from their system of rotating chairmanship and therefore, indirectly, a slight upon their equality. The squabble which ensued was no more than a storm in a teacup and was settled to Molotov's satisfaction, but the incident showed how touchy the Russians were and are in such matters and can hardly be said to have been a good start for the conference.

Next the United States and Britain had agreed with the Russians that each of the three great powers should have the right to veto, but the Russians were not pleased that it was extended to France and China also. Nor did Molotov enjoy the vehement and popular demands of smaller Allied powers, notably the Australians and the Dutch, to have a louder and more effective voice in the conduct of world affairs (that is, in drawing up the peace treaties as well as in the United Nations) than the Big Three arrangement had contemplated. It is true that the San Francisco Conference did manage to produce an acceptable charter for the new United Nations, but it also showed many signs of disagreement between Russia and the Western powers, and its work was hampered by frequent deadlocks and minor crises. Molotov could leave America with the feeling that his personal reputation was enhanced, that he had stood up firmly for his country and shown himself to be an adroit and stubborn diplomat. Against that he took away with him the fear, ever present in Bolshevik minds, that something like an anti-Bolshevik combination had begun to develop in the West.

## *Chapter Eleven*

### VOROSHILOV—THE RED ARMY

**I**N 1888, when he was seven years old, Klim Voroshilov went to work in a mine in the Ukraine. He has been portrayed as a sturdy little boy, with a straight, strong back and clean-cut, handsome features, who came of fighting stock. His father, after thirty years in the Czar's army, retired on a tiny pension and got a job as railroad watchman. He had fought in the Crimean War and at the bloody siege of Plevna when Russia freed half the Balkans from Turkish misrule. Doubtless he told stories of courage to the eager child, whose own career has been full of romantic escapes and daring personal combats.

At ten Klim left the mine and was put to minding cattle on a landlord's estate, and had a bit of schooling, enough to learn to read. At the age of fifteen he was apprenticed to a mechanic in the Dumo works in a small town in his native Ukraine. That, perhaps, was the age when he first "began to think" and became a revolutionary. For at eighteen he was fired and put on the black list for organizing a strike.

Voroshilov tells a story in his memoirs about his life in those days. There had been trouble at the works, and a police official named Grekov was sent there to keep order, an autocratic man full of his own importance. One day some of the young workers, including Voroshilov, were passing the house of the postmaster on their way home from work, just as Grekov arrived. The others touched their caps to the official, but Voroshilov walked on with his head in the air.



"You young blackguard, take your cap off!" shouted Grekov, and jumped up and ran after the boy, waving his fists and shouting.

"I laughed in his face," Voroshilov says. "He seized me angrily by the collar, and I grabbed hold of his necktie. In the struggle he fell flat on the ground. Police whistles blew and constables arrived, beat me up, and dragged me off to the clink."

After that young Klim was in the bad books of the police and reacted by organizing open-air meetings for workers and a revolutionary circle to distribute subversive literature. Then there was a strike at the factory, and Voroshilov was one of the leaders. The strike succeeded, but he was dismissed and black-listed, and got a job at Peifil's boiler works in Taganrog, but was again dismissed three days later when they learned who he was, and then found employment in an anthracite mine, but once more was traced by the police and thrown out at a moment's notice.

Early in 1903, at the age of twenty-two, he worked in the Hartman locomotive works at Lugansk (now named Voroshilovgrad), in the Donets iron and coal district of the Ukraine, where he joined the Bolshevik wing of the local Social-Democratic Labour Party, and in 1904 was elected a member of the Lugansk Bolshevik Committee. Then Russia was at war with Japan, and revolutionary unrest waxed high as Russia's arms waned in the east. A Soviet of Workers' Deputies was formed in Lugansk and a metalworkers' union. Voroshilov became chairman of both these bodies and began to ride high on the tide of revolution. He was never a great orator, but had a gift of direct and moving speech and for making friends. In 1905 thousands of workers marched to the gates of the local prison to demand his release after he had been arrested as leader of a strike, and he was set free.

At the beginning of 1906 Voroshilov was sent as delegate of the Lugansk Bolsheviks to the Fourth Con-

gress of the Communist Party, which was held in Stockholm, where he first met Lenin. For the next year he was engaged in arms-smuggling and other anti-Czarist activities. The Bolsheviks still hoped that the revolutionary movement had a chance of winning. In the spring of 1907 Voroshilov was sent as a delegate to the Fifth Party Congress in London, where he made the acquaintance of Stalin, and began a friendship that has remained close and unbroken to this day.

It is not absurd to suppose that Stalin, from the outset, had the same kind of effect upon Voroshilov as Lenin had upon Stalin. Voroshilov, one imagines, was a bright, handsome young man who fought from a deep inner conviction that a change was needed, but also for fighting's sake. He may have lacked and doubtless respected the cold persistence and the stern, hard will that were Stalin's guiding lights. Voroshilov could not rise to the intellectual level of Lenin or Trotsky or Bukharin, but as the son of a veteran soldier he learned to admire the "guts" he found in Stalin. At any rate, a few months later, after his escape from Archangel in North Russia, where he had been sentenced to a term of exile, he promptly made his way to Baku, Stalin's home ground. It was surely more than accidental; there must have been something between these two men which drew them together. Stalin, dour and unpopular, devious and determined; Voroshilov, gallant and gay but not, perhaps, in those days, greatly interested in Marxian dialectic. A man of action, as was Stalin, but one for whom life was easy, because of his personal charm in his dealings with men . . . and women. At any rate, Voroshilov hitched his wagon to Stalin's star, and never broke away. From Stalin's viewpoint there was great value in winning this disciple, upon whose loyalty and courage he could rely and whose popularity he used. This may be partly hypothesis, but the fact remains that Voroshilov has always been closer to Stalin personally than any other of the senior Soviet leaders.

For the next six years Voroshilov's life was that of all the underground Bolshevik leaders in Russia—arrests, imprisonments, exiles, escapes, re-arrests, aliases, chased like a fox by the Czarist police dogs, forced to be hard and mistrustful of his closest friends and relatives, yet learning withal that here and there were men of his own calibre, Stalin, Molotov, and a handful of others, upon whom he could rely. In 1913 he was exiled to Cherdyn in Siberia and escaped the following March to Tsaritsyn on the Volga, where he found work in an armament plant.

Prior to 1917, despite his friendship with Stalin, Voroshilov was only a tough young underground rebel, but in March of that year when the Czar abdicated, he, like Molotov, had the advantage of being one of the few Bolshevik leaders in Russia who was out of jail at a time when Lenin and Lenin's associates and Trotsky were still in exile abroad. Thus, Voroshilov did much to swing the Petrograd garrison against the Czar and at once became a member of the Petrograd Soviet. Later, he did good service for the Bolsheviks in his native Ukraine, where, as Mayor of Lugansk, he led the campaign against Kerensky's provisional government. At the end of the year he was summoned back to Petrograd to co-operate with Dzerzhinsky and Uritsky in forming the "Extraordinary Commission to Fight Speculation and Counter-revolution," called the Cheka, then the G.P.U., then the N.K.V.D., then the M.V.D., now regarded by foreigners as the police-state within a state, the dark and sinister force which has enslaved Russia and aims to enslave the world.

The word Cheka was a composite of the first syllable of the two Russian words meaning Extraordinary Commission, and for several years after its foundation, and perhaps much later, it was something very different from a secret police or even from such an organization as the F.B.I. in America during the war. This difference lay in the fact that any Communist in any position might suddenly be

designated to an "Extraordinary" job with use of the unlimited powers that Lenin had placed at the Cheka's disposal when the struggle against counter-revolution became a matter of life and death. One may go further and say that the Cheka was, in certain spheres, the punitive arm of the Soviet Government rather than a simple police organization. Of course, in those days, there wasn't time to build up a regular organization like the F.B.I., such as the G.P.U. did become. But always there was the idea that men sometimes most highly placed in other branches could be and were drafted for special jobs with a Cheka *mandat* (credentials). For instance, there were the well-known "flying tribunals," or travelling courts, which meted out punishment to counter-revolutionaries in areas recovered from the Whites.

Frequently, during my twenty years' residence in Moscow, I came across cases of Soviet leaders in such widely diverse fields as diplomacy and railroad construction, who had done special Cheka jobs at one time or another, perhaps more than once, without ever being regular members of the Cheka organization. To some readers this may seem to justify the charge that Russia is indeed a police-state, if its most prominent men were thus associated with the secret police, but in the first years after the Revolution the Cheka was not a secret police but something like the French Revolution's Committee of Public Safety, only more efficient and better organized. In fact, Lenin is said to have remarked that he had the French committee in mind when he formed the Cheka, but had tried to avoid its salient weakness, the lack of full powers to act immediately and decisively.

Voroshilov's career is an example of the duality of jobs. With Dzerzhinsky and Uritsky, he was one of the founders of the Cheka, but whereas Dzerzhinsky became head of that redoubtable body and Uritsky was its chief in Petrograd, Voroshilov was never considered a "Chekist" nor held a high Cheka command.

This brings up another point of cardinal interest and importance in Soviet history. At least for its first twenty years and perhaps to this day, nearly all the Bolshevik leaders had such a variety of jobs. From high to low, they never seemed to stay put for more than a few months. At one moment they were organizing workers or running a revolutionary committee. At another they were running a factory or a bank. In higher circles, as we have seen, Molotov, as late as 1943, doubled as Foreign Minister and head of the tank industry.

In recent years there has been a tendency towards specialization in the highest circles of the Soviet regime, but before that the key men in Russia were pinch-hitters to be put anywhere at anything where the need was greatest. The explanation is simple. The whole system was so new and the ground to be covered so vast and the number of competent, trustworthy men so relatively small that they had to double and triple and quadruple their functions and skip from pillar to post and ride three horses at once.

Early in 1918, Voroshilov was sent to his home town of Lugansk. To reach it he had to pass through the German Army, which had occupied almost all of the Ukraine. In apparent defiance of the Russo-German peace treaty signed at Brest-Litovsk in the first week of March, he organized a force of partisans and obtained two armoured trains from the workers at the Hartman locomotive works where he had been employed and organized strikes a dozen years before. This was Voroshilov's first military command, but he at once gave evidence of the quality which has distinguished good fighting men throughout history, audacity. He sent a telegram to the Central Committee: "With a force of 600 men, consisting mainly of local workers, we have set out from Lugansk to meet the German invaders. . . . We are proceeding via Rodakovo and Kharkov to Konotop. We shall give the executioners of the proletarian revolution blow for blow."

This projected march was some three hundred miles through an area strongly held by the Germans, and in point of fact, Voroshilov got no further than Rodakovo, his first objective, but his spirit and local success rallied the miners and metalworkers of that thickly populated region to the Bolshevik cause. At Rodakovo he was elected Commander-in-Chief of all the partisan forces in the Ukraine, which later became the Fifth Ukrainian Army.

Meanwhile a grave peril to the Red cause was threatening Tsaritsyn on the Volga (now Stalingrad), two hundred miles due east of Lugansk, where the Whites were planning to make a junction with Czech forces advancing from Siberia. If that junction could be effected by the capture of Tsaritsyn, not only would the Volga artery be lost to the Reds but the flow of grain from the North Caucasus to the starving cities of Petrograd and Moscow would be stopped.

Voroshilov broke contact with the enemy and marched his Fifth Army to Tsaritsyn. He fought his way through the Germans, then through the army of the White General Mamontov. The Reds took with them their women and children to save them from reprisals and travelled on the two armoured trains which had been supplied by the Hartman factory. There was a dangerous moment when they reached the River Don and had to build a bridge for the trains to cross. They beat the enemy off and traversed a high plateau to Tsaritsyn, where Stalin had just arrived. The march took nearly three months.

Curiously enough, Stalin, though a member of the Bolshevik Supreme War Council, had been sent to Tsaritsyn not to fight but to hurry up supplies of grain to the centre, another typical example of Bolshevik duality of function. He saw at once that it was not a question of supplies but of saving the city from the Whites. The Red defenders were discouraged and not free from the taint of treachery. As a result of Stalin's messages to

Lenin, Voroshilov was placed in command of the city which by midsummer was completely surrounded and invested by superior forces of the enemy.

Voroshilov was on familiar ground. He had worked in an arms plant there four years earlier and was doubtless well informed about the local citizenry and their loyalty or the reverse. At any rate, Stalin and he took vigorous action against doubtful elements in the civilian population and the army. Among the latter were officers appointed by Trotsky, who sent an indignant telegram to Voroshilov demanding their reinstatement. Many years later Voroshilov declared that a copy of Trotsky's telegram still existed in the War Office archives, with a red crayon scrawl across it in Stalin's writing: "Pay no attention." Before the end of September the Whites were defeated, the siege was raised, and the flow of grain that was life to the Soviet cities had been resumed.

Tsaritsyn was a turning-point in Voroshilov's career, for two reasons. First, it confirmed and solidified, if that were needed, his friendship with Stalin. Henceforth he was Stalin's man, utterly loyal in every phase and circumstance of the struggle against Trotsky and the other opposition forces. To Stalin, the victory of Tsaritsyn was not only a triumph for the Red cause but a big score in his duel with Trotsky. Voroshilov had shared and contributed in what was, after all, Stalin's first great personal success as a revolutionary leader. Second, Voroshilov found at Tsaritsyn his chosen career as a soldier and military organizer. At last he was able to realize the childhood dreams which his father's stories had inspired.

With the exception of a brief term of service as Commissar of the Interior in his native Ukraine in 1919, Voroshilov henceforth has held nothing save military positions in the U.S.S.R. Before he had time properly to warm his seat in the commissar's office in the Ukraine he was ordered to suppress a White-Monarchist

insurrection of the Czarist General Grigoriev. As before in the march on Tsaritsyn, Voroshilov and his staff travelled in an armoured train and found themselves surrounded by greatly superior White forces at a town named Koristovka. There was no help in sight, but Voroshilov thought quickly. He sent out a flood of telegrams, bound to be intercepted by the enemy, to imaginary Red detachments, instructing them to converge upon his assailants. The Whites were panic-stricken and fled without striking a blow.

In the same campaign Voroshilov demonstrated his personal courage in action. One of his subordinates, later Red Army General Khmelnitsky, relates that in a skirmish near this same village of Koristovka, a big White soldier leaped at him and was about to run him through with a bayonet when Voroshilov tackled the White and beat down his gun. The White soldier turned on his new assailant and held him fast while he drew a revolver from his belt. Voroshilov thrust his thumb under the hammer of the gun, pulled out his own pistol, and shot the other dead. Later on he became one of the best revolver shots in the Red Army and in his early fifties, when Commissar of War, was beaten by only two points in a contest with the Red Army pistol champion.

During the brief "honeymoon" after American recognition of the U.S.S.R., Ambassador Bullitt and his personal secretary, Charles Thayer, sought to cement Russian-American friendship by teaching polo to the Red Army. Voroshilov took part in the polo games and rode as hard and fast as any of the youngsters.

Voroshilov commanded the Fourteenth Army in the Ukraine against the White forces and in October of 1919 was attached to a newly formed unit, the First Cavalry Army. At Tsaritsyn Voroshilov had had under his orders the popular leader of Cossack Cavalry, Budenny, now one of the marshals of the Red Army. Only a year later Budenny was commander of the First Cavalry Army and



Voroshilov had the technically subordinate rank of Political Commissar.

The First Cavalry Army was one of the most successful semi-guerrilla forces in history. It broke the White General Denikin whose troops had reached Orel, a bare two hundred miles from Moscow, and chased them back to the Caucasus. A short time later the Poles invaded Russia and drove in as far as Kiev. The First Cavalry Army made a cross-country march of more than six hundred miles at top speed, smashed the Polish vanguard and drove the Poles back to Lvov, then pushed on with the Red invasion of Poland, which reached the gates of Warsaw to be defeated without a battle and melt ingloriously away.

Soviet history blames this fiasco on Trotsky, for ordering the Red Army to push ahead too fast and failing to co-ordinate the different sectors of the front and the services of supply. Trotsky in turn blamed Budenny for dallying before Lvov instead of marching north to take part in the culminating attack on Warsaw. Be that as it may, the Cavalry Army turned south after the Polish War, smashed the Ukrainian nationalist Petlura, and played a big part in the defeat of the last of the White generals, Baron Wrangel, the collapse of whose army in the Crimea ended the Civil War and the hopes of counter-revolution.

In the following year, 1921, Voroshilov, by now recognized as one of the leading Red field commanders, conducted mopping-up operations in the Caucasus against scattered bands of Whites. In March of that year he was a delegate, not in a military capacity, to the Tenth Party Congress in Petrograd, when a most alarming rebellion broke out in Kronstadt, the fortress-island north of the city which had been the military cradle of the Revolution. Bolshevik historians ascribe this mutiny to counter-revolutionary agents and even to foreign intrigue, but the fact of the matter was that it represented the growing

resentment of the peasant masses against requisitions of food for which the peasants were paid only in promises or worthless paper money. The proof of this is that the Kronstadt mutiny was followed by peasant revolts in Tambov and other north-central provinces which forced Lenin in that same year to introduce the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.), a definite concession to the peasants. But there was no time for changes in policy in dealing with the Kronstadt mutineers. Voroshilov was ordered to break the mutiny at once by force of arms. With characteristic boldness he led his troops across thin ice, which broke in places and drowned many of them, and succeeded in storming the rebel fortress at great cost of life.

As a reward for his services, Voroshilov was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Party, to which he has belonged ever since. The next three years were spent as military commander in the North Caucasus, and in 1924 he was promoted to command of the Moscow Military District. In the following year, 1925, Trotsky was replaced as Red Army war lord by Mikhail Frunze, one of Stalin's henchmen, and Voroshilov's former commander in the final campaign against Wrangel. In October of that year Frunze died, and Voroshilov took his place as Commissar of War and became a full member of the Politburo without a preliminary stage as candidate.

Voroshilov had now reached full stature in the Soviet hierarchy. At the beginning of 1926 he was sent with Molotov and eight other top members of the Central Committee to reorganize the Leningrad Party, which Zinoviev had carried into the opposition camp in the previous December. Molotov and Voroshilov were old friends, but this was the first time since the year of the Revolution, 1917, that they had worked together in concert. Their association was as successful as it was harmonious; Zinoviev's opposition was crushed, and the Leningrad Party was brought back into the fold.

For the next ten years Voroshilov devoted himself almost exclusively to the Red Army, not only to raising its quality in mechanization and military technique, but also to making it the defence of a socialist regime. These years, be it remembered, witnessed the struggle to socialize Russian industry and agriculture which closely affected the army. Voroshilov's position was clearly stated in an article he wrote about the peasant question, which he declared was "one of the most burning, cardinal problems of policy for our Party." He continued: "The close co-operation of the working class and the rural poor on the one hand, and of the middle [self-supporting] peasantry on the other, guarantees us a solid Red Army. . . . The smallest divergence in the union of these builders of the new life is inevitably reflected in the morale and preparedness of the Red Army. . . . The Party political educational apparatus in our armed forces will only be able to carry out its work if there is iron unity in the Party."

These words explain the Stalinist "Party line" during the latter phases of the intra-Party controversy. Opposition by that time had become a sin and a crime, little short of treason. The backbone of the country, the backbone of the army, was the socialist consciousness of the peasants, from whose ranks the army was mainly drawn. As Voroshilov wrote: "The Red Army and the Red Fleet are strong because of their political consciousness." But always, as will be explained in a later chapter, Voroshilov regarded the army as subordinate to the civil authority of the Soviet State. In his loyalty to Stalin and to that civil authority, he not only had no Napoleonic ambitions of his own, but was ready to fight them in the army wherever they might appear.

Voroshilov was Commissar of War for fifteen years, a long period in any modern cabinet. In 1935 the Soviet Government re-created the rank of marshal in its army, which had been obsolete since the days of Kutuzov, who

defeated Napoleon. Voroshilov was the first to be named to that rank. If the world had only known, this was a clear enough pointer to the fact that Russia was preparing for the same sort of "great patriotic war" against the Germans as it had fought against the French one hundred and thirty years earlier, and perhaps one of Voroshilov's greatest services to his country was that he did make the Red Army ready in morale and military efficiency for that titanic struggle.

In June, 1940, he was replaced as Defence Commissar by Timoshenko. At that time it was believed abroad that Voroshilov was demoted because of the Red Army's setbacks in the beginning of the Finnish War, which Timoshenko ended by breaking the Mannerheim Line. Nevertheless, Voroshilov did not cease to be one of Stalin's right-hand men in the Politburo, and when the greater war against Germany broke out, he was promptly chosen as one of the supreme five-man State Committee of Defence, or "War Cabinet." He took an active part in the defence of Leningrad, with Zhdanov, and later co-operated with Marshal Zhukov to break the German siege of that city, but during the war his value lay chiefly in advising and helping Stalin in all matters which required a combination of military and political judgment, and it is worth recording that he was the only high-ranking soldier who accompanied Stalin to the Teheran Conference with Churchill and Roosevelt. At that conference Stalin promised that Russia would attack Japan within three months after the defeat of Germany, a pledge which Churchill later stated was fulfilled to the day. In consequence, Voroshilov was relieved of his position on the State Committee of Defence late in 1944 and sent to the Far East to prepare the Soviet attack on Japan.

In the spring of 1945, after the capitulation of Hungary, Voroshilov was sent there as a member of the Allied Control Commission. According to the inter-Allied procedure as first established by the Anglo-

Americans in Italy, the chairmen of these control commissions would be the representative of the power which had done most to liberate a given area from the Germans. So Voroshilov became chairman and set himself to a task which at first bewildered and later exasperated the Americans and British all over ex-Nazi Europe, to make sure that certain small states could never henceforth be used as a base or jump-off for hostile action against Russia. Simultaneously, Zhdanov was given the same task in Finland, and Vishinsky in Rumania.

## *Chapter Twelve*

### KAGANOVICH—HEAVY INDUSTRY

**L**AZAR MOISEYEVICH KAGANOVICH, the only Jewish member of the Politburo, was born in a village near Kiev, Ukraine, in the year 1893. His parents were poor, but not so poor that he had to work in early childhood, and he received an elementary-school education. At the age of fourteen he went to work in a leather plant in Kiev. He was a tall, upstanding boy, handsome and ready of speech, and soon won influence among his fellow-workers. In 1911, at the age of seventeen, he joined the Bolshevik Party in Kiev, and only three years later was elected a member of the Executive Committee in that city.

Fourteen years younger than Stalin, Kaganovich belonged to a later generation in the revolutionary movement, and was more like a left-wing leader of the C.I.O. in recent times in America than the underground Bolsheviks of the Stalin and Voroshilov school. In 1915 he was arrested for fomenting strikes and talking against the war, but instead of imprisonment or exile, was simply sent back, under police surveillance, to his native village. He returned illegally to Kiev and in 1916 was head of a union of leatherworkers in the town of Dnepropetrovsk. He had already begun to use an alias, like most of the Bolsheviks, and at this time called himself Stomakhin. Other names he used were Goldenberg and Kosherovich. He was fired from the Dnepropetrovsk shoe plant, which was working for the army, as an anti-patriot, but he was so popular with the workers that they carried out a six-week strike in order to force his reinstatement. Then

"Stomakhin" was denounced by a Czarist police agent as the illegal underground worker Kaganovich, and he was forced to flee to Melitopol, where, under the name of Goldenberg, he again organized strike movements and other anti-Czarist action.

Later in 1916, again employed in a shoe factory, he worked on the committee of the Party in the Donets Basin steel town of Hughesovska—which took its name from an Englishman, George Hughes, who had built there the first Bessemer furnace in Russia. After the overthrow of the Czar in March, 1917, when the new spirit of independence led to the formation of soviets (councils) all over Russia, Kaganovich was elected Vice-President of the Hughesovska Soviet.

At that time few of the soviets anywhere, from Petrograd downward, were Bolshevik. They were anti-monarchist, and in a Russian sense, revolutionary, but for the most part the Bolsheviks were only a small but well-organized minority, which steadily increased in strength and numbers.

Like Molotov and Voroshilov in different spheres, Kaganovich had the thankless job of trying to win a stubborn majority of Social-Revolutionaries and Jewish Bundists and Mensheviks and Ukrainian nationalists and win-the-war patriots to the anti-war, anti-nationalist Bolshevik "line"—an activity which brought him to the notice of the anti-Bolshevik authorities. At that time, Kerensky, as head of the Provisional Government, was trying to hold Russia, and as he bravely declared, keep faith with his Western allies. So Kaganovich was drafted into the army in May and sent to Saratov, a big garrison town on the Volga, for basic training.

Kaganovich had no thought of accepting the trivial rank of a recruit. Immediately, he began to organize a soviet among his fellow-soldiers, and within a month, despite the handicap of his Jewish origin, was elected Vice-President of the Workers' and Soldiers' Soviet of

Saratov. It was a phenomenal success, which he owed to his charm of person and speech and to his experience as a revolutionary agitator. Nor did it pass unnoticed by the Party leaders in Petrograd, who summoned him in June to a meeting of delegates of all the Communist units in the armed forces. These delegates represented twenty-six thousand members of the Party, and elected Kaganovich to their executive committee. It was at this time that he first met Stalin and Molotov. At the end of June he went back to Saratov, with, one may imagine, greatly enhanced prestige in Bolshevik circles. Then came the Bolshevik setback of July, 1917, when a premature revolt in Petrograd enabled Kerensky to arrest many of the Bolshevik leaders and forced Lenin to flee in concealment to the Finnish border. This event had its repercussions on the Volga, in Saratov, where Kaganovich was arrested by the Kerensky military police.

He seems to have escaped without difficulty to Gomel in White Russia, where he became Chairman of the Communist Party and a prominent figure in the local soviet and shoe-workers' union. At the time of the Bolshevik seizure of power in November, Kaganovich was at Mogilev, former Czarist headquarters in White Russia, where he performed the most outstanding and daring feat of his career. Kerensky had wired to the Cossack divisions and a picked regiment of winners of the St. George Cross at Mogilev for support against the Reds. They were able and willing to move, and might have turned the scale. In that crucial hour, Kaganovich spoke to them man to man, told them why the Revolution had been made and why it must succeed. Somehow he prevailed. Kerensky received no help from the Mogilev forces and was forced to flee from Petrograd.

In the next two years, Kaganovich helped organize the Red Army, without taking much personal part in the Civil War. He did, it seems, raise a rebellion of railroadmen and other workmen behind the lines of General Mamontov.



tov in the province of Voronezh. At that time, as it happened, Voroshilov was attacking Mamontov with an army from the front.

In September, 1920, Kaganovich was sent to Tashkent in Central Asia where the Bolsheviks had not yet fully established their authority. Under the command of Frunze, who was later to succeed Trotsky as Commissar of War, the Red Army won Central Asia for the revolutionary cause and Kaganovich became one of the leading Bolshevik administrators as a member of the Council of Commissars of the new Turkestan Republic, and finally as Mayor of Tashkent. In this position the twenty-seven-year-old Kaganovich had to maintain an extremely delicate balance between the leaders of the indigenous population, who had been told that they were freed by the Revolution from the Czarist Russian yoke, and the Russian officials, who although Bolsheviks, still regarded themselves as overlords of the "natives." Stalin, Commissar of Nationalities at the time, was handling on a wider scale the same problems which Kaganovich faced in Tashkent. We cannot say that at this point Kaganovich was already one of Stalin's henchmen, but there is no doubt that their identity of views about the status of minor and formerly subject nationalities proved a bond between them.

At the end of 1920, after the Polish War, Trotsky had a plan to dragoon and militarize the trade unions, which Stalin opposed from the outset. The issue was fought out in the provinces as well as in Petrograd. In the Ukraine Molotov defeated the Trotskyite thesis as did Kaganovich in Central Asia. Finally, Lenin, who had never liked Trotsky's proposals, threw the whole weight of his authority against them. To cement the victory, Stalin obtained the recall to Petrograd of Molotov from the Ukraine and Kaganovich from Central Asia, and the latter was elected President of the national leatherworkers' union. This new position ranged him definitely on Stalin's side in the struggle against Trotsky. Before that, no

doubt, he had leaned towards Stalin's viewpoint, but from now on the issue was clear: he was one of Stalin's men.

Accordingly, when Stalin became Party General Secretary in 1922, he put Kaganovich in charge of the placement of Party personnel under Molotov, who had been raised to membership in the Secretariat. This was a most important job, because the training and selection of competent men was one of the chief problems to be solved in the early years of the Soviet State. One of the reasons for the retreat to the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) of private enterprise in small industry was precisely this lack of educated personnel, a lack which became more evident and serious after the Bolsheviks really settled down to tackling industrialization and the modernization of agriculture on a socialist basis. Some years later Stalin described the questions of *cadres* (the framework of management) as the most vital single factor in the development of Soviet industry. Kaganovich evidently measured up to his task, for within two years he too was admitted to the charmed circle of secretaries of the central committees, and was made a member of the Central Committee as well.

In 1925 Kaganovich was given the key post of Secretary of the Ukrainian Central Committee, which means that at the early age of thirty-two he was Party boss of an area inhabited by more than thirty million people, including the richest agricultural section of the country and the Donets coal and iron basins. Again he came to grips with the national question. The Ukraine had never been treated as a colony, like parts of Central Asia and the Caucasus, but local nationalism was exceedingly strong, and once more there was a balance to be maintained between the rival claims of local sentiment and the Government of Moscow.

Kaganovich attained nationwide prominence by the building of the great dam and power plant on the Dnieper River. It is claimed that every man, woman, and child

in Russia sent contributions to the Dneprostroy, as it was called, the country's pride and joy, the proof to the world that Russia was throwing off the chains of ignorance and backwardness and becoming a modern industrial state.

I knew well the late Colonel Hugh Cooper, who did a magnificent job as consultant and adviser on the whole project, and had many talks with him about the initial difficulties of conducting so vast a project with untrained workers. Again and again the Colonel would repeat that their spirit and determination to get the job done at all costs literally produced miracles, so that these raw peasants, men and women, actually beat American records for pouring concrete. Much of the credit for this was due to Kaganovich, who later performed a similar "miracle" in building the Moscow subway.

In 1926 Kaganovich was elected a candidate member of the Politburo. In 1928 he was recalled to Moscow and resumed his post as one of the Secretaries of the Central Committee of the U.S.S.R. Party, and two years later, at thirty-five, became a full member of the Politburo, and *the* Secretary (Party boss) of Moscow city and province. This was in the middle of the First Five-Year Plan, and although the Province of Moscow contained one-quarter of the nation's industry, much of it was light industry, textiles, shoes, and food processing. Under Kaganovich the capital became a centre of heavy industry and the whole city was virtually reconstructed. The present extensive system of subways was begun, old tree-shaded boulevards changed into wide streets, asphalt paving replaced cobblestones, and scores of great new buildings were erected, from hotels and public offices to workers' housing projects. In addition the Province of Moscow became self-supporting instead of food-importing, and a great inland port was created on the outskirts of the capital by completion of the canal which linked the Moscow River with the Volga.

The only time I ever met Kaganovich was in the late

thirties, at a lunch given by Bulganin—then Mayor of Moscow and now one of the dozen most important men in Russia—for some French and British engineers who had assisted in building the first section of the Moscow subway, later extended across the Moscow River into a network of tubes like those of Paris or London. Although Bulganin was host, Kaganovich was really presiding at the banquet, as the original builder of the subway, the man whose name it bears. It was a small and intimate party at which Kaganovich made the only speech except for a brief address by Bulganin, but he did it, as the saying is, to the King's taste. The French and English guests had only shared in the building of the first section, when conditions were exceedingly tough, and one of the Englishmen who sat next to me said that in those days he would have bet a hundred to one that the project could never be completed. Kaganovich made this the keynote of his speech; he said in effect:

"You foreign specialists might well have despaired of success. We had only one of your foreign 'shields' for tube construction, which we did not know how to use properly. Our workers were untrained and we ran into difficulties, even disasters, from unknown springs and rivers underground, from impenetrable rock, and from the terrible quicksands upon which Moscow seems to be founded. But, gentlemen, I congratulate you because you never lost heart or failed to go personally into the front line of our struggle, into the most dangerous places, in a manner which some of our Russian engineers were then unaccustomed to do. You set an example which we learned to follow, and today, instead of one foreign 'shield' we have a dozen Russian-made 'shields' to bore our subways."

He could have said nothing that pleased his visitors more, because, like many foreign specialists in Russia, they had noticed the reluctance of Russian engineers to take their coats off and get down in the mud and grease. Kaganovich spoke simply but with grace and humour.

He is a most effective speaker, with a broad Rabelaisian humour and a pleasant ease in delivery that entertains while it instructs and almost makes statistics sound interesting. Several years later I met Wendell Willkie in New York and thought that although older than Kaganovich, he had the same ease and frankness of speech and personal attractiveness.

As has been shown, most of the Bolshevik leaders were pinch-hitters, jumping hither and thither to meet emergencies. Kaganovich was a super-pinch-hitter, and in 1933 was put in charge of the device which redeemed the "man-made famine" and made possible the success of the collective-farm movement. Under his direction the political sections of the machine and tractor stations in less than one year brought order out of chaos on the collective-farm front and won on a stricken field at the eleventh hour.

In a speech in 1934, Kaganovich gave the picture of those hectic days. He said:

"During the years 1929-33, 191,000 collective farms and about 7,000 State farms were brought into being. That means that, on an average, 120 collective farms, two machine and tractor stations, and four State farms were organized *every day*. [Emphasis in the original.] During that time we not only had to overcome the resistance of the kulaks but select many tens of thousands of tried and hardened Bolsheviks to work in the rural districts."

It is difficult for Westerners to understand the function of these political sections in the collective-farm system, later in the railroads, and in the Red Army. They were made up of trustworthy and experienced members of the Communist Party ready to go anywhere and do anything, irrespective of local politics or persons. They were responsible only to Moscow and were empowered to override the decisions of local government officials and local Communist leaders, and if necessary to dismiss them and appoint new ones in their stead.

By this means Kaganovich put the collective farms on their feet, and two years later, as Commissar of Railroads, his first cabinet post, applied the same method to transportation, which had always been one of the weakest links in the Soviet economic chain. At the time, 1935, Soviet transport was in a parlous plight, quite unable to handle the freight traffic of the industrialization programme. To quote a single figure, there were six million tons of lumber, coal, and ore piled up on sidings when Kaganovich took over. In less than six months he had broken the freight jam, and daily freight car loadings rose from 50,000 in January to 73,000 in July—an increase of almost 50 per cent.

The Bolsheviks were trying to make bricks without straw. Either they had to depend upon technicians of the old regime, whose loyalty and energy were dubious, or upon youngsters, who were loyal enough but didn't yet know their jobs. The political-section workers chosen by Kaganovich had complete loyalty and a fairly high level of technical education. They operated directly and indirectly; they punished graft and incompetence and offered new incentives in wages and other rewards to efficient workers. On one occasion in Siberia, a veteran roundhouse engineer was shaken out of his complacency by the political-section appointment of a young woman to take his place. This case was widely reported in the Soviet press. One such woman engineer, Zinaida Troitskaya, became in 1938 manager of the Moscow Circuit Railroad, which ties together the eleven trunk lines which centre upon the city. In World War II Troitskaya rose to be Chief Inspector of Railroads, with the rank of general in the army, probably the only woman general in the world today.

In 1937 the Commissar of Heavy Industry, Orjonikidze, died, and Kaganovich succeeded him. By that time heavy industry was being geared to war preparedness, and Kaganovich in a speech told how his Commissariat

was so "heavy" that it gave birth to a litter of no less than thirteen minor Commissariats. The purpose of this change was to eliminate red tape and increase efficiency by a process of decentralization. The growth of industry had been so rapid that no single central department could handle it.

In the following years Kaganovich did some more super-pinch-hitting, heading the oil industry, then back to railroads (1938-42) and came to be recognized as the representative in the Politburo of heavy industry, just as Molotov represents foreign affairs, Voroshilov the army, and Mikoyan commerce. During the war Kaganovich was not one of the original five members of the supreme "War Cabinet," but joined it in 1942, as the head of wartime transportation. Like other members of the Politburo, he was sent to front-line areas in moments of emergency, notably the Caucasus during the German drive of 1942.

After the war Kaganovich was put in charge of a specially created Ministry of Building Materials, which included everything from houses for veterans to the steel girders and concrete for rebuilding the thirty thousand wrecked factories in the devastated areas.

In 1946 there was a near crisis in the Ukraine. The harvest in that chief breadbasket of Russia had been ruined by the worst drought in fifty years. Its great cities like Kharkov and Kiev were little more than rubble, and agriculturally it had been thrown back more than thirty years by the war. The 1946 grain crop was less than half that of 1913; sugar-beets were lower still; cattle were 30 per cent below pre-World War I and hogs down to a third. Misery and discontent were so widespread and the emergency so great that Stalin decided to send Kaganovich back to his native province as Party Secretary, in place of Khrushchev. The latter then was, and still is, a member of the Politburo.

In 1947 the Ukraine had an excellent harvest. Recon-

struction of the cities made headway and the drowned-out coal mines of the Donets Basin were put back into production. The Dnieper Dam was sufficiently rebuilt for three Russian-made turbines to begin operation, which restarted the power net of the surrounding industrial area. (It is not without interest that four at least of the other turbines to be replaced are now being built by the General Electric Company in Schenectady.) Once again Kaganovich had proved himself in a critical moment. In December, 1947, he returned to Moscow as one of the Vice-Premiers of Stalin's "Inner Cabinet," and Khrushchev resumed the place he formerly held as Party boss of the Ukraine. Today Kaganovich's function is to supervise the twenty-four industrial ministries which have succeeded the original "litter" of thirteen born in 1938 from his "heavy" Commissariat.



### *Chapter Thirteen*

## ANDREYEV—THE PARTY LINE AT HOME

ANDREI ANDREYEVICH ANDREYEV is probably less known to the Western world than any of the senior members of the Politburo, to which he was admitted in 1931 at the early age of thirty-six, but his standing is of the highest. As President of the Central Control Commission, which has been described as the "keeper of the Party conscience," Andreyev has the right, theoretically at least, to call any of his colleagues, even Stalin, to account on matters of Communist conduct and doctrine. He has the further distinction of being the only member of the present Politburo who headed an opposition movement inside the Party, and not only lived to tell the tale but suffered no more than a temporary setback in his career.

Andreyev was born in 1895 near Smolensk, an old and historic city west of Moscow. His father was a landless peasant, so poor, like most of his class, that he drifted off to Moscow in search of employment after little Andrei had had but two years in grade school, his only formal education. The father found unskilled work in a textile mill, and Andrei, then rising thirteen, got a job as dishwasher in a saloon near a large printing establishment. Some of the employees were radicals who gave the boy pamphlets and revolutionary literature which they had secretly, and illegally, printed. He studied them at night in the corner of the crowded room where he slept on a pallet with his father. At the age of sixteen he went to southern Russia where for three years he earned a living

as a migrant worker in the metallurgic plants of various towns. By this time he had become a full-fledged revolutionary. In 1914, soon after the outbreak of World War I, while he was employed in a Petrograd armament factory, Andreyev joined the Bolshevik Party.

The Party was then at a very low ebb as a result of the terrific police pressure which had followed the abortive revolution of 1905-6. Most of its leaders were in exile abroad or in Siberia. New recruits were welcome, and Andreyev soon proved his usefulness by getting a job in the office of the workers' sick-benefit fund at the huge Putilov armament works. During the period of repression almost all workers' organizations, including of course the Bolshevik Party, were declared illegal by the Czarist authorities, with the exception of sick-benefit funds. The Bolsheviks were well pleased to have one of their own men installed in a legal position in so big and important a plant as Putilov.

Andreyev evidently made good use of his opportunities, for in 1915 he was elected a member of the Petrograd Committee of the Party, representing the working-class district of Narvskaya Zastava, where he first came into contact with Molotov. After the abdication of the Czar in March, 1917, when trade unions were legalized, Andreyev was assigned to organizational work for the Party in the Metalworkers' Union. For several years this was Andreyev's chosen field, and in it he reaped quick success . . . and momentary disaster. When the Bolsheviks seized power he was sent to the Urals as field organizer in the metalworkers' union there, and in 1919 was moved to the Ukraine for similar work in the Donets Basin. That year he was elected a member of the southern executive board of the central body of trade unions, and in 1920 became an executive officer of the nationwide trade union congress, one of the key posts in the Russian labour movement. In the same year, only five years after joining the Communist Party, he was elected a member

of its Central Committee, at the age of twenty-five. His photographs at this period show a close resemblance to H. G. Wells as a young man. Andreyev is under middle height but sturdy and compact; he is an effective but not inspiring speaker.

Andreyev's lapse into opposition occurred at the Tenth Party Congress in March, 1921, when he led the so-called "Workers' Opposition." At that time there was a dispute in the Central Committee and the Party as a whole about the trade union movement. The union leaders, headed by Shliapnikov and Andreyev, put forward the simple thesis that the Revolution had taken the factories from the bosses and given them to the workers. Therefore, they said, the unions, representing the workers, should henceforth run the factories, and consequently industry, throughout the country.

Lenin and Stalin held that this was a narrow and short-sighted policy, that industry did not belong to the workers as such, but was the property of the nation as a whole, and therefore should be under national management, in which of course the unions could play a prominent part, especially in regard to scales of wages, social security, and old-age pensions, and in general terms, in relations between the mass of the workers and their employer, which henceforth was the State. Shliapnikov and Andreyev wanted the unions to be the employer, as well as the employed, but Lenin and Stalin insisted that, in the interests of the nation as a whole, the ultimate employer must be the State itself, and that the function of the unions could only be that of an intermediary.

A third point of view, advanced by Trotsky, held that the unions were getting out of hand, and far from being allowed to run industry, should be firmly disciplined. He proposed to make the industrial workers of Russia and their unions into what he termed a "labour army," subject to semi-military control and regulations.

Lenin's thesis prevailed and has ever since provided

the pattern for co-operation between the Soviet trade unions and the Soviet State. Trotsky's high-handed proposals were brushed aside, and the Shliapnikov-Andreyev programme brought upon its leaders a severe reprimand, as a factional and oppositionist group within the Party. Andreyev himself was dropped from the Central Committee. He seems to have taken this setback in the old Bolshevik tradition, which allowed anyone to stand up in a meeting and attack anything until a vote had been passed, after which Party discipline compelled everyone to obey the majority ruling. Andreyev submitted, and in 1922 was elected President of the Railroad Union, a post he held until 1928. In March of 1922 he was readmitted to the Central Committee and has been a member ever since.

The official records of the Communist Party say little about Andreyev at this period, but there seems no doubt that he remained in close touch with Molotov, through whom he was brought into the Party Secretariat in 1924. Stalin had evidently pardoned his brief lapse into opposition, and in 1926 he was elected a candidate member of the Politburo. In 1928 he was switched, in accordance with the Bolshevik system of jumping from pillar to post, to agricultural work in the North Caucasus, a long way from trade union leadership. Actually, no doubt, his prime task was direction of the Party units in the collective-farm campaign. He succeeded so well that in 1931 he was appointed head of the Party Control Commission in Moscow, which to this day is one of the most important bodies in the Communist Party. He was also made a full member of the Politburo and Vice-Premier of the Soviet Union under Molotov.

From 1931 to 1935 Andreyev was Commissar of Railroads. The material difficulties of this post proved too great for him, and in 1935, when rail transportation had become chaotic, he was replaced as railroad commissar by Kaganovich, and put back into the Secretariat.

Throughout this period he remained a member of the Politburo, which indicates that he is better as a political organizer within the Party than as an executive administrator outside.

During the war Andreyev was Minister of Agriculture and subsequently became Chairman of the post-war Council on Collective Farm Affairs. He appears to have performed the duties of both jobs well enough, but, as his speeches indicate, he considered them chiefly from the angle of Bolshevik Party members and the influence they could exercise upon their non-Communist fellows. Today Andreyev represents agriculture in the Politburo, but even more than that he is concerned with the action and influence of Communists in agriculture—and in other branches of Soviet life. He stressed this point in a speech in 1939, when he deplored the fact that the percentage of Communists in the villages was unduly low.

Much of Andreyev's influence in the Bolshevik hierarchy can be traced to his long connection—since 1924—with the Party Secretariat, that central nervous system of Party bosses and “ward heelers,” from Moscow down to the small local men in the provinces, which Stalin built into so potent a machine of manipulation and wire-pulling. During and since the war Stalin delegated some of the functions of the Secretariat to Zhdanov, Malenkov, and Andreyev, who were formally named Secretaries of the Central Committee of the Party, but they operate under his control and ever-watchful eye. Zhdanov's place in the Politburo has been taken by General Pantaleimon Ponomarenko, hero of the Byelorussian resistance movement and Secretary and Premier (Party boss) of Byelorussia.

## Chapter Fourteen

# ZHDANOV—THE PARTY LINE ABROAD

[*Author's note*

After the following chapter was first written, Zhdanov died, early in September, 1948. In view of his importance in the top echelon of the Bolshevik system, I have thought it best to leave the chapter almost unchanged, and to defer discussion of the effects of his death until later in the book. At this point, however, I wish to draw attention to the fact that a *Pravda* editorial, published a few days after Zhdanov's death, which strongly reaffirmed the stand he had taken in the Cominform dispute with Marshal Tito, was signed Ts K, the initials (in Russian) of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. The purpose of this unusual gesture was to show that Zhdanov's attitude had the support of the *officially* supreme body of the Party, and that his policy was not individual but represented the collective will of the Party.—W.D.]

WITH the obvious exception of Stalin, Zhdanov was the most interesting figure in the Russian Politburo. He was the "problem child" of modern Soviet politics and perhaps the indirect source or cause of President Truman's astounding statement that Stalin is the prisoner of the Politburo.

Albert Rhys Williams has shown in his books that he knows Russia and the Russians better than most Americans. He was in Petrograd during the Revolution and

met most of the Bolshevik leaders, and afterwards spent many years in the Volga towns and villages. He knew Zhdanov well in the early thirties, when Zhdanov was Secretary of the Communist Party in Nizhnii Novgorod. Mr. Williams writes to me:

"Zhdanov was always in buoyant spirits, alert, amiable, quick-witted, and evidently drew upon a deep, wide-ranging knowledge of Russian history and life. He had an excellent fund of quips and anecdotes, and being an excellent raconteur, kept his hearers entertained for hours."

The official records state that Andrei Alexandrovich Zhdanov, born at Mariupol in the Ukraine in 1896, was the son of a school inspector, but Williams informs me that he was the son of a priest, of a long line of priests, and bears this out by Zhdanov's fondness for stories twitting the follies and foibles of the old Russian clergy. If Williams is correct, it is a singular fact that three of the most important men in the Politburo—Stalin, Mikoyan, and Zhdanov—had clerical educations or antecedents.

Unlike any of the Politburo members discussed thus far, Zhdanov was not prominent in Bolshevik affairs until long after the Revolution, although he joined the Party in his teens. Priest's son or not, he seems to have had a good high-school education and is said to have known French and German as well as Russian history and Marxism. At an early age he was brought to the town of Tver (now Kalinin), north-west of Moscow, where he joined the Party and was educated. In 1916 he was drafted into the army and became a sergeant in a reserve regiment in the small town of Shadrinsk in the Urals. After the abdication of the Czar he was an active member of the local soldiers' soviet, winning the men over to the Bolshevik cause against the Mensheviks and Social-Revolutionaries and other parties competing for popular favour.

He remained at Shadrinsk during the Revolution, and

gradually rose in local standing, but his first important appointment was when, in 1922, at the age of twenty-six, he was chosen Chairman of the Provincial Executive Committee in his home town of Tver. Later in the same year he was sent to Nizhnii Novgorod. By its geographical position on the Volga and ancient tradition of struggle against the Tartars, Nizhnii was then and is today one of the most important provincial cities in Russia, outranked now by Stalingrad in renown, but a centre of industry, commerce, and Russian culture. Here Zhdanov remained for no less than twelve years, until 1934. He must have done well, although his name was still unknown to foreigners in Moscow, because in December, 1925, he was elected a candidate member of the Central Committee of the Communist Party. That was the month when Zinoviev took the Leningrad Party, second in importance only to the Moscow organization, into the opposition against Stalin. Although Zinoviev failed, his coup caused great furore and anxiety in the ranks of the Central Committee. Zhdanov, a convincing and provocative speaker, blasted the Leningrad opposition with such satire and vigour as to win Stalin's approval.

It may have been at this time that Zhdanov met Albert Rhys Williams at a rest house near Moscow in the village of Podsolnochny. Williams wrote to me:

"One evening our conversation turned to the church and the peasants' belief in holy relics. I told how in one monastery I was shown a wisdom tooth of Moses, the thumb-nail of Isaiah, and a piece of wood from the cradle of Christ. I asked: 'Did the church really believe that all these relics were genuine?'

"The consensus of opinion was that when these relics were brought to Russia by the missionaries from Byzantium, the priests and people accepted them in good faith. They brought prestige to a church or monastery and increased the number of worshipping peasants and pilgrims . . . and likewise revenue.



"At this point Zhdanov broke in with one of his whimsical anecdotes. On St. Nicholas' Day, he said, the big cathedral in a provincial town was crowded with peasants. When the service ended, the congregation pressed forward to kiss the holy relics. Near the altar, amidst clouds of incense, stood a big-bearded, corpulent priest, holding the cathedral's most prized possession, a hair from the head of its patron saint. One by one, the faithful bent over to kiss this sacred hair stretched out between the two hands of the priest. Amongst the most fervent was a little old red-kerchiefed peasant woman. As she bent forward in reverence, she said to the priest, 'I kiss the hair of the Saint, Father, but somehow my lips can't feel it and my eyes can't see it.'

" 'How could you, Babushka?' said the priest. 'Here I've been holding the blessed hair in my two hands for over forty years, and I've never once seen it myself.'

"This story was told in pantomime, with Zhdanov now imitating the booming voice and gestures of the priest, now those of the little old peasant woman. Yet his stories did not seem to have any particular animus against the church, and in the same vein he related other anecdotes satirizing Soviet bureaucrats and their venality and bungling."

Under Zhdanov, Nizhnii Novgorod changed from a provincial trading centre to a major industrial city. Its population grew fivefold to half a million, and great housing projects were erected for the newcomers. They came to work in the new auto plant, largest in Russia, and in a new lathe factory, also the greatest in the country. The big Sormovo works, making locomotives, railway cars, river vessels, and bridges, was wholly modernized and vastly expanded. A complex enterprise, manufacturing radio-telephone and other modern electrical equipment, was launched, and a fifty-thousand-kilowatt power plant was built to supply current for the city's increased needs. Educational facilities were greatly enlarged to

include eight colleges and a university, while the city maintained no less than four theatrical repertory companies. Elsewhere in the province—Zhdanov's responsibility extended over an area with almost four million inhabitants—a large fertilizer works and a paper mill were built.

This was a period of great industrial expansion throughout Russia, and remarkable as was Zhdanov's success, other reasons must be sought for the startling advance he later made in political prestige and power. Perhaps one of these reasons was that Zhdanov detected a weakness or fallacy in the Bolshevik attitude towards opposition. The long and bitter intra-Party controversy gradually led to the view that opposition was little short of treason. This may have been correct in Russia, but it is not for nothing that the British, wise in statecraft, actually pay a considerable salary to the man who is designated as "Leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition." To the Russians the last two words would be a contradiction in terms, with the result that the upper ranks of the Party tended to become a chorus of yes-men, always a danger in any highly centralized regime. Zhdanov's later speeches and articles showed that he did not hesitate to disagree with the majority view, but he was always able to discriminate between legitimate criticism and his pleas for greater democracy inside the Party on the one hand, and the creation of factions inside the Party that might impair its efficiency, on the other.

One may surmise that Stalin and the other leaders in Moscow not only approved Zhdanov's work as an industrial builder in Nizhnii—the fact that he held the same job for so long a period is proof of this—but also came to realize that here was a man of character and courage who was able to think things out for himself and to demand the same quality from others. They could not fail to note—doubtless with surprise—that the Nizhnii administration had less trouble with opposition than any

other major region, yet simultaneously had an unusually high level of free speech and constructive criticism within the Party.

It may well be, also, that Zhdanov represented a new type of Bolshevik, a link between the past and the present, or the future. For one thing, he was never arrested nor suffered the Czarist police persecutions of his contemporary (in age) colleagues in the Politburo, and the fact that he avoided the worst bitterness of the opposition fight in his own bailiwick may have helped him to retain a freshness and cheerfulness of spirit as welcome as it was rare. At all events, this comparative subordinate in the Bolshevik hierarchy was suddenly named a candidate member of the Politburo in January, 1934, and a member of the Secretariat, with Kirov and Kaganovich, under Stalin.

Eleven months later, when Kirov, the Party boss of Leningrad, was assassinated, Zhdanov took his place and retained it for twelve years of such effort in peace and agony in war as no great city has ever known in so brief a period. Leningrad, once St. Petersburg, Russia's "western window upon Europe," built by Peter the Great and named for his patron saint, had cost the lives of half a million serfs in the years of its construction on the Neva marshlands. Zhdanov held it against the Germans in the greatest siege which history has ever known. Conservative estimates record that six hundred thousand of its inhabitants died of starvation, apart from losses in battle, by shellfire, and by bombing. The story of this siege is still to be written, but much of the credit for its unparalleled resistance goes to Zhdanov and accounts in no small degree for the position he attained in post-war Russia.

Zhdanov's first outstanding appearance in Party affairs was at the Plenary Session of the Central Committee of the Party in February, 1937, in the middle of the Purge. In his report he minced no words in condemnation of the

treasonable activities of opposition leaders and their contacts with foreign spies, but he also stressed the necessity for freedom of speech and legitimate criticism inside the Party itself and denounced the practice of selecting ("co-option" was the word he used) regional and even provincial Party committees rather than the "more democratic principle of election," as he termed it. He also stressed the importance, under the new Constitution, of non-Party Russians and declared, amid applause and laughter, that there were some two hundred million of them, "rather more than our two million Communists."

At the All-Union Communist Congress of March, 1939, Zhdanov again made a major political speech in which he frankly deplored the "excessive injustices" of the Purge and the "refusal to be worried about human beings . . . a malady which still ails many leaders of our Party organizations." In the same speech he championed for the first time the *rights* of Party members as compared with the previous insistence exclusively upon their *duties*, and the Congress voted a modification of Party rules as follows:

(a) Party members have the right to criticize any Party worker at Party meetings.

(b) Party members have the right to elect and be elected to Party organs.

(c) Party members have the right to be present on all occasions when decisions are made about their activities or conduct.

(d) Party members have the right to address any question or statement to any Party body up to and including the Central Committee of the Party.

To the rank and file of the Communist Party, which was still shaken by the excesses and injustices of the Purge, Zhdanov's innovation was a tonic pledge of freedom and hope. Immediately after that congress he was named a full member of the Politburo.

Hitherto I have not mentioned Zhdanov's interest in foreign affairs, which was so marked in recent years. It probably began in 1935, when he became a member of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (Communist International), which then was advocating the united front against fascism rather than world revolution. In 1936 Zhdanov made in Leningrad a speech of warning to the Finns. He said: "We Leningraders sit at our windows looking out on the world. Near us lie small countries . . . who permit adventurers to scheme within their borders. We are not afraid of them. . . . But if they are not satisfied to mind their own business, we may feel forced to open our windows a bit wider."

In 1938 he was Chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Soviet Congress, and criticized the policy towards Japan of the Foreign Affairs Commissariat, then headed by Litvinov, which he said should be more resolute in its attitude towards the "arrogant and provocative conduct of the agents of Japan and of the puppet state called Manchukuo."

In June of the following year, *Izvestia*, the official organ of the Soviet Government, published a signed article by Zhdanov at the time of the half-hearted attempts of the Chamberlain and Daladier Governments to make a common front with Russia against Nazi aggression. Zhdanov's words gave Muscovites something they had not known for a dozen years, an expression of disagreement by a single individual on matters of highest policy. He wrote:

"I permit myself to express a personal opinion in this matter, although my friends [meaning his colleagues in the Politburo] do not share it. They still think that in beginning negotiations on a pact for mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R., the British and French Governments had serious intentions of creating a powerful barrier against aggression in Europe. I believe that the British and French Governments have no wish for an equal

treaty with the U.S.S.R. . . . It seems to me that the British and French desire not a real treaty acceptable to the U.S.S.R. but only talks about a treaty in order to play upon public opinion in their countries about the supposedly unyielding attitude of the U.S.S.R. and thus to make it easier for themselves to make a deal with the aggressors."

Foreigners in Moscow, and many Russians also, stared agog at the words "personal opinion . . . although my friends do not share it." If we read them aright, they meant that Zhdanov was advocating and being allowed to advocate a basic change in Russian foreign policy. That advocacy bore fruit less than two months later in the Non-aggression Pact with Germany.

As Zhdanov had said earlier, in the speech quoted about Finland, the Russians regarded Finland as a possible jumping-off place or base for an attack upon them. The Finnish frontier was only twenty-five miles from Leningrad, the former capital of Russia and its second-largest industrial centre. Twenty miles behind that frontier the Finns had constructed, with the help of German, French, and British military engineers, a series of fortifications in depth called the Mannerheim Line, which was said to rank in strength with the famous French Maginot Line. The name itself was significant because Marshal Mannerheim had ended the Finnish civil war between Reds and Whites in 1918-19 by calling in troops of the German Marshal von der Goltz, and represented the most pro-German and anti-Russian party in Finland. The Russians believed his "Line" was less a defence against them than a cover behind which an attack upon Leningrad could be prepared. Their belief was strengthened by the fact that the Finns had built airfields in the neighbourhood ten times bigger than their own air force could require. This is what Zhdanov had meant by saying that the Finns "were permitting adventurers to scheme within their borders." He said this in 1936, which makes it clear

that he was referring to the Germans rather than to the French or British. That, moreover, was the year of Hitler's Nuremberg speech in which he declared: "We would swim in plenty if we possessed the wealth of the Ukraine and the Urals."

And, despite the events of August, 1939, it was against the *German* danger that in October, 1939, the Russians proposed to the Finns that fortified zones on both sides of their respective frontiers should be disarmed, which involved the abandonment of the Mannerheim Line. The Soviet also asked for permission to lease and fortify the peninsula of Hango at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, which leads to Leningrad. In return, the Russians offered to cede to Finland a large area of Soviet territory inhabited by people of Finnish stock.

The Finns are one of the most stubborn and patriotic nations in the world, and like the Poles or the Irish, have a deep and ancient hatred for foreign domination. Perhaps they were unaware of Hitler's intention to use their country as a base for attack upon Russia; perhaps they hoped he would do so. In any case, they refused to accept Russia's demands or any compromise, and in November Russia attacked.

At this point the international situation was extraordinary. On one hand, Russia had attacked Finland to prevent the Mannerheim Line being used as a base for a German attack upon Leningrad. On the other hand, the Germans stood pat and said nothing, while France, England, and the United States stormed against Russian aggression, and the French and British actually prepared expeditionary forces to aid the Finns. The Russians won the war, hands down, in less than six months, but I think they lost more than they won. They got off to a bad start, by underestimating the courage and perhaps the political loyalty of the Finns, and suffered initial defeats which convinced the general staffs of the world that the Russian military machine had been wrecked by the Purge.

I reached Moscow just after Christmas, when the prestige of the Red Army and Soviet esteem in the West were at their lowest ebb. The Press Department of the Soviet Foreign Office could speak about the parallel between a small weak state in Long Island that might become a base of attack for a strong foreign country upon New York, and the Soviet necessity to defend Leningrad, but such excuses left foreign reporters cold. Then, I was informed, Zhdanov came to Moscow to urge Stalin to take decisive measures. Immediately four armoured divisions, which had had battle experience in frontier conflicts with the Japanese, were transferred to the Finnish front under the command of General Stern. In mid-February, they broke the Mannerheim Line like paper with a Blitzkrieg of tanks, armoured planes, and heavy guns—and the war was over. The peace terms were unexpectedly mild, with no indemnities or reparations claimed and little more in territorial demands than Russia had asked at first; the dismantling of the Mannerheim Line, and the Russian right to fortify the peninsula of Hangö at the entrance to the Finnish Gulf. At this point, it was said, Zhdanov came forward to advise against harsh vengeance upon the Finns.

For this report there is no official evidence, but the fact remains that after the defeat of the Finno-German armies in 1944, the terms exacted by Russia from Finland were again, in the opinion of the London *Times*, "surprisingly lenient." The Russo-Finnish Peace Treaty was signed by Zhdanov, who then had in Finland a position similar to that of General MacArthur in Japan, with the salient difference that Finland was not occupied by Russian or any other Allied troops. Indeed the *New York Herald Tribune* reported in the summer of 1945 that there were only three hundred Russians in the whole country. Finally, I quote from two articles from the *New York Times*, one an editorial in March, 1945: "Russia permitted in Finland the first free, parliamentary election



held anywhere in war-scorched Europe since Hitler started out to conquer the world," and a Helsinki dispatch dated December 2, 1945: "Finland today is an example of a fully independent country bordering the Soviet Union. As far as can be ascertained, there is absolutely no Russian interference in Finland's internal affairs."

Since then the Russians have reduced by one-half the heavy total of reparations which the peace treaty imposed upon Finland. *Time* magazine of December 19, 1946, describing the arrival of Zhdanov at a Finnish airport, reports that he said cheerily in Finnish, "Hello, boys," to the guard of honour, to which they replied, "Hello, General." *Time* adds: "That's the way Zhdanov ran the Russian mission to beaten Finland, no rough stuff, no looting, not much interference in Finnish affairs."

In 1946 Zhdanov showed a new phase of his versatile and independent character by demanding a revision of the Soviet philosophy of life and a new outlook on art, literature, and education. This was described in the Western press as a "cultural purge," and foreign writers poured scorn on Russian attempts to curb and bridle Pegasus. Musicians in particular were outraged by Soviet criticism of such men as Prokofiev and Shostakovich for ideological errors and "bourgeois tendencies." Zhdanov's speeches, however, give a somewhat different picture. For instance:

"If an industry's production is unsatisfactory; if a programme has not been fulfilled, it is quite normal for those responsible to be reprimanded, but if an unsatisfactory education of human minds is proceeding, then we tolerate it."

Or, elsewhere: "There is a lack of militancy and a fighting spirit which explains why some of our philosophers fear to apply themselves to new problems . . . daily posed by practice, and for which philosophy is obliged to provide an answer. . . . It is necessary to put an end to a cowardice alien to Bolshevism."

In essence Zhdanov urged greater independence and thoroughness of thought, and said that would-be writers and instructors must not content themselves with bare quotations from Marx, Lenin, or Stalin, but must "advance more courageously the theory of Soviet society, of contemporary natural science, ethics, and æsthetics. . . . Marx states that earlier philosophers only explained the world, while the task today is to change the world. We have changed the old world and built a new one, but our philosophers, unfortunately, do not adequately explain this new world."

In another passage, Zhdanov spoke of a new textbook on political economy which, he said, should be ready in the near future. This probably refers to the work on which Stalin is now chiefly engaged. It is apparently a monumental volume in which, according to Zhdanov, a large number of authors are co-operating under Stalin as editor, and will provide an explanation of the economics of socialism as it exists and works in the Soviet State. This may almost be described as bringing Marx up to date in the sense that Marx, as an economist, wrote about capitalism (his book was called *Capital*) and proved to his own satisfaction that it must some day be replaced by socialism. But in modern Soviet opinion that didn't go far enough, and Marx's *Capital* has long ceased to be the textbook in the required college course in economics.

As an international extension of Zhdanov's belief that all phases of life should contribute to and be linked with the Communist system, he helped create and headed the Cominform (Communist Information Bureau). Discussion of the activities of this organization, which won Zhdanov notoriety in the West, and which apparently have not altered since his death, belongs to a later chapter.

## *Chapter Fifteen*

### MIKOYAN—FOREIGN TRADE

IN Constantinople they have a saying that one Greek can outsmart three Jews, and one Armenian can outsmart three Greeks. The Armenians, like the Jews, have suffered shocking racial persecution; and, like the Jews, they have survived it. Yet between the Jews and the Armenians there was a fundamental difference. Both nations were scattered across the face of the earth as traders and aliens living by their wits, but the Armenians always had a homeland which they loved; and the persecution of the Armenians, unlike that of the Jews, was conducted in that homeland, never abroad. I have known Irish patriots and American, British, French, and Texan, but among them all there is no greater love of their homeland than among Armenians.

Under the Czars, Armenia was a "colony" like Central Asia, exploited and drained of wealth. Half the Armenian population lived outside the Czarist Empire under Turkish dominion. During World War I, and in succeeding years, they were so thoroughly "eliminated" that today there is not a single Armenian in the east Turkish provinces, Kars and Ardahan, which once had nine-tenths Armenian population. The Czarist rule was a cold stepmother to Russian Armenia; the Turks murdered the Armenians under their dominion.

A visit to Soviet Armenia (rarely achieved by foreigners) supplies thoroughly convincing evidence that this little upland country gained more from the Bolshevik Revolution than almost any of the states or nationalities that make

up the U.S.S.R. One indication of this is that Armenia is the only Soviet Republic to which large numbers of its nationals living abroad, even in the United States, have willingly returned in recent years. It was the first Soviet country to enjoy full religious freedom, and has made great advances in agriculture and industry from a generous works programme, especially the irrigation projects, conducted by Moscow.

Armenia owes these benefits in first degree no doubt to the energy and diligence of its people, who are immensely grateful to the Bolsheviks for their protection from the Turks and for the help given Armenian survivors in Turkey to return to Soviet Armenia. But the country also owes much to its foremost citizen, Anastas Ivanovich Mikoyan, member since 1935 of the Bolshevik Politburo.

Mikoyan was born in 1895 in a village called Sanain, to what is recorded as a worker's family, but was sufficiently prosperous for his parents to entertain the ideal of workers and peasants in Ireland or Brittany or Poland: that their son should become a priest. Accordingly, he was admitted to the Armenian Religious Seminary (Nestorian Catholics) in Tiflis, where he received an excellent education, and unlike Stalin, who was expelled from an Orthodox seminary in the same city fifteen years earlier, graduated with honours at the age of twenty.

This was in 1915, and I have been unable to find any source-material which explains why Mikoyan gave up the Nestorian priesthood for Bolshevism. One may surmise, and his subsequent career has shown it, that he is the kind of man who thinks deeply and carefully, but acts quickly when he reaches a decision. At any rate, in 1915 he joined the Bolshevik Party and in 1917—the year of the Revolution—was a member of the Baku Bolshevik Committee, fighting in the streets, where he was wounded. Prior to that he had edited a Red newspaper called the *Social-Democrat*, and upon his recovery he became editor of the official organ of the Baku Soviet, and took an active

part in nationalization of industry and finance in the great oil city of the Caspian.

Conditions in Baku were then not unlike those in Petrograd under the Provisional Government of Kerensky, when the Bolsheviks were trying to win a majority on the city soviet. The fall of Czardom and the breakdown of central authority had led to the formation in the Caucasus of local governments largely composed of landlords, businessmen, and other prominent citizens who often collaborated, to further their own interests, with enemy forces, German and Turkish, which had advanced at the collapse of the Czarist armies.

In the first flush of victory the Bolsheviks had "liberated" all the subject nations of Czarist Russia, the Poles and the Finns and the Baltic races and the peoples of Central Asia and the Caucasus. For a time some of them paid nominal allegiance to the Revolution, but there was much local hostility towards Russians, and in addition the local ruling class sought the aid where possible of foreign troops against revolutionary movements.

In Baku, capital of the province of Azerbaijan, the bourgeois authorities reacted sharply against the Bolsheviks, many of whom lost heart. At a meeting of their leaders, early in 1918, it was decided to take ship up the Caspian to Astrakhan, then firmly in Bolshevik hands. Despite his youth, Mikoyan spoke out against this retreat, declaring that the dockyard and oil workers of Baku would fight against the bourgeois and that gradually other workers and poor peasants from the suburbs could be brought into the struggle. Mikoyan was voted down but refused to leave the city when his colleagues set sail for Astrakhan. At sea they were intercepted by a superior force of enemy vessels and the leaders, later known as "the twenty-six Commissars," were arrested and taken back to Baku. The rank and file were allowed to continue their journey.

Shortly afterwards Mikoyan also was arrested and

imprisoned with the twenty-six Commissars. They were rescued, however, by a crowd of dockyard workers, and once more set sail for Astrakhan. *En route* they were betrayed by the captain of the vessel and landed on the eastern side of the Caspian, in Krasnovodsk, then occupied by the British and the Whites. After a brief court-martial trial the twenty-six Commissars were sentenced to death and executed.

By an irony of fate, Mikoyan, the most determined Bolshevik of the lot, who had stood out for resistance in Baku when his colleagues weakened, escaped execution because his name had not been published in the Baku government newspaper, which had only given names of the twenty-six Commissars captured at sea. For the next few months Mikoyan led the miserable life of a prisoner in the jails of Central Asia and nearly died of scurvy in Ashkhabad. He finally managed to win over guards in the prison hospital and actually established an underground Bolshevik organization which made contact with the Bolsheviks in Baku. By threat of a general strike, the latter obtained the release of Mikoyan and his fellow-survivors. They were compelled to march on foot from Ashkhabad to the port of Krasnovodsk, where they were put on a ship for Baku, in March, 1919.

At this time the Bolsheviks in Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia were cut off from Moscow and the North by the armies of the counter-revolutionary White General Denikin, who held the north slope of the Caucasus and the southern Ukraine. Because the ownership of land, banks, and factories had been retained by, or restored to, the wealthy class, all the Bolsheviks could do was to convince the masses that they were no better off under a nominally independent nationalist government than they had been before. To accomplish this, Mikoyan was required to show powers of judgment and political manœuvring on a different and much wider scale from his previous activities. Meanwhile he organized movements of rebellion in

various parts of the North Caucasus behind Denikin's lines and made contact with the Bolshevik forces in Astrakhan, then commanded by Kirov, to whom he managed to smuggle oil from Baku. In May, 1919, he led a general strike in Baku itself, and was arrested, but managed to escape.

In the summer of 1919 Mikoyan rescued the well-known Georgian Bolshevik leader, Orjonikidze, from the Whites and got him to Astrakhan through Denikin's naval blockade. In September he went to Astrakhan himself on Party orders and thence made his way to Moscow, where he first met Lenin and Stalin, and, at the early age of twenty-four, won recognition as a Bolshevik provincial leader.

After a long and circuitous return journey via Tashkent in the heart of Central Asia, Mikoyan reached the eastern shore of the Caspian, intending to return to Baku, crossed it in a small vessel under inexperienced sailors, and found himself in Makhach Kala, where the Red Army from Astrakhan, commanded by Kirov and Orjonikidze, was preparing an attack on Baku, which it took at the end of April, 1920.

Shortly afterwards, Mikoyan was sent by the Central Committee of the Party to Nizhnii Novgorod (now Gorky) on the upper Volga, to lead the Bolsheviks there in a struggle with the "Workers' Opposition" inside the Party. With characteristic acumen, he concentrated his efforts on the Sormovo locomotive, shipbuilding, and steel-fabricating works, whose workers held a dominant position in the local soviet and Party politics. With their support he defeated the former "Workers' Opposition" majority.

As a delegate to the 1921 Party Congress, which produced some of the most turbulent and angry discussions the Bolsheviks ever had, because of the Kronstadt mutiny and the fight for the New Economic Policy, Mikoyan was an all-out supporter of the Lenin-Stalin

programme. He had already been brought close to Stalin by the nationality question in the Caucasus and has remained his devoted henchman ever since. At this time and in subsequent years—he was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Party in 1922—he fought Trotsky, Bukharin, and other opposition groups.

For the next four or five years Mikoyan was busy working, under Stalin, on national problems in the North Caucasus, and the development of socialized industry in such a way as to assist the former subject peoples of Russia without undue economic sacrifice. In 1926 he became Commissar of Trade of the U.S.S.R., and in the next ten years was actively concerned with a cardinal problem of poor and backward countries: that is, the production of food. Russia had practically no canning and food-preserving industry other than grandma's jam-pot and pickle-jar when Mikoyan first became Trade Commissar, with the direction of the food industry under his control. Today the canning industry of the U.S.S.R. is second only to that of the United States. In 1936, Mikoyan, who had become a full member of the Politburo the previous year, visited America to investigate the food industry in the United States. He was the first member of the present Politburo to make this trip and is the only one to have done so except Molotov.

During his stay in America he visited the big meat-packing plants in Chicago, on which similar enterprises in Russia, notably the Mikoyan meat-processing plant in Moscow which handles ten thousand animals daily, have been modelled. In addition, Mikoyan was one of the first people, certainly the first foreigner, to detect the importance of the quick-freeze patents in the food business. To the average American of 1948, frozen food conservation on the Birdseye system developed by the General Foods Corporation is a commonplace, but twelve years ago it was less well known. With an Armenian flair



for something new and practical, Mikoyan was quick to catch the possibilities for Russia in the Birdseye patents.

In a speech in 1936 to the All-Union Soviet Congress, Mikoyan stated: "The Russian merchants of the old days did not know what good food was. They used to stuff themselves with pancakes and caviar, and then would go to their doctors to cure them of overeating. The more cultured members of the bourgeoisie and aristocracy, who spent half the year in foreign countries, used to order the food they required from abroad."

With this one may compare a statement by Sir Hugh Willoughby, who was sent by Queen Elizabeth in the sixteenth century to the court of Ivan the Terrible. He declared that the upper class in Russia consistently overate, also drank too much, but the masses lived, he said, "on black bread and stinking fish, from which they mightily do thrive."

Mikoyan has done more than any single man or any dozen men to bring Russian food standards up from the pre-Revolution, almost medieval level to something which today is not so far short of United States standards as many Americans believe. The average Russian does not yet eat so well as the average American, or even Englishman, but in the last twenty years he has advanced a century or more.

I know Mikoyan personally and am inclined to regard him as one of the most important men in the Politburo, which is not to suggest that he ranks with Molotov as a possible successor to Stalin, but that he has unusual charm and agility of conversation and a broad and brilliant mind. I have been told that the execution of the twenty-six Commissars and his own sufferings thereafter made him savagely anti-British, and I do know that he has compared British conduct in Ireland and India with Turkish and Czarist treatment of his native Armenia. On the other hand he is far too realistic and practical to allow the

wounds of the past to mortify the present. In the same 1936 speech quoted earlier, he said:

"Our Red Army has fine aeroplanes and tanks. In the event of war we shall endeavour to provide it with the finest foodstuffs as well. . . . The Czarist war commissary used to stuff the soldiers with coarse and insipid food. I remember in 1919 when we, a group of Bolsheviks, were being brought, under an escort of British soldiers, from Krasnovodsk to Baku, how astonished we were to see the British soldiers eating cake, canned chicken, and canned beef. They had sweets, jam, compote, chocolate, and condensed milk."

Should international relations improve, Mikoyan can make, perhaps is already making, a great contribution to peaceful intercourse. No one will deny the importance of cultural exchanges of professors and students, literature, art, and science, but a sure and more permanent road to friendship between nations is mutual trade. Mikoyan has allowed no anti-British prejudice to hamper the development of Anglo-Russian trade, and other trade agreements have been signed, or are being negotiated, with Sweden and Switzerland, France, Italy, and the Benelux group. Furthermore, Mikoyan is one of the few top Russians who fully understand the value to world peace of satisfactory big-scale trade between the U.S.S.R. and the United States.

## *Chapter Sixteen*

### KHRUSHCHEV—THE UKRAINE

NIKITA SERGEYEVICH KHRUSHCHEV belongs to a group of people familiar and numerous in present-day Russia, but somewhat of a novelty among his colleagues in the Politburo. The Russian word for it means the "moved forward" or "promoted" ones. That is, persons of low origin and education who, because of their courage and ability in relatively humble spheres, were given an education, often as adults, after the Bolsheviks came to power, to push them forward to much more important duties. Like Voroshilov, Khrushchev, born in April, 1894, was the son of parents so poor—his father was a coal miner in the Kalinovka village of Kursk Province just outside the Ukrainian border—that as a young child he was aid to a shepherd and worked as a boy in the mills and mines of the Donets region, apparently without education.

He joined the Communist Party in 1918, and fought in the Civil War in the Ukraine, with no particular distinction, nor is there any mention of his Party activities at this period, although he was already in his middle twenties. After the war he got a job in an iron mine, where his advancement began. He enrolled in one of the newly formed Rab-faks (schools intended to prepare uneducated adult workers for subsequent higher training), and evidently did, at last, make an impression, because, on graduation three years later, he was given official posts of some importance in the Party machine at Stalino and later in Kiev.

In appearance, Khrushchev is a typical Ukrainian miner, squat and powerful, with heavy jaw and hulking shoulders. To this day he wears a worker's cap and rough clothes, and has none of the suavity or urban veneer of many of his colleagues. A strong man and a driver, he knows how to speak bluntly to a crowd of workers. By 1929, apparently, he had gone forward enough to be picked as a possible future industrial executive in the newly launched Five-Year Plan. He was then, at the age of thirty-five, sent to study for two years at the Industrial Academy in Moscow, which ranks highest in its field in the Russian educational system, and might be compared to the graduate school of business administration at Columbia.

Khrushchev headed the Party organization in the academy, and attacked the Trotsky and Bukharin oppositionists, who were strongly entrenched there, so vigorously that after leaving the academy he was retained for Party work in Moscow. Thenceforward Khrushchev's progress was as rapid as it had previously been slow. He became Party boss first in one and then in another of the industrial districts of Moscow and, in 1934, was appointed Second Secretary of the Moscow Communist Party, next in command to Kaganovich, with whom his later career has been closely linked, and was elected a member of the Central Committee of the U.S.S.R. Party.

In 1935 Kaganovich was given a super-pinch-hitting job on the railways, and Khrushchev succeeded him as Party boss of Moscow city and province, the most important single area in Russia proper. Khrushchev followed Kaganovich's footsteps in directing the development of Moscow and in completing the first section of the subway with such success that he received the Order of Lenin and was elected to the Supreme Soviet (Congress) of the U.S.S.R. from one of the Moscow districts. At the beginning of 1938 Khrushchev was appointed chief of the Party in the Ukraine, a position he has held ever

since with the exception of a single year, and was named a candidate member of the Politburo. In 1939 he received the Order of the Red Banner of Labour as a reward for the progress of Ukrainian agriculture and became a full member of the Politburo.

It is not generally realized abroad that the Ukraine, although one of the constituent Republics of the U.S.S.R. and a former part of the Czarist Empire, has long been a nation, one of the largest nations in Europe in fact, with a population today of over forty million inhabitants. Throughout history the Ukrainians never ranked as an independent state, either as a monarchy or a republic, but the national consciousness of its people, who are the stubbornest and toughest of the Slavic races, was forged by centuries of conflict with Tartars, Poles, Turks, Swedes, and Russians. They retained their own language, which is closely akin to Russian, and developed a rich literary and artistic culture. Their villages and national costumes were gayer and more decorative than those of their Russian neighbours, and although the absence of geographic frontiers, high mountains, or wide rivers forced them to accept foreign suzerainty, the Ukrainians have a local pride as great as any Texan, a local patriotism as great as any Scot.

When the Soviet Revolution took place, the Ukraine was almost wholly occupied by the Germans, who set up a puppet government. For the next two years conditions in the Ukraine were similar to those previously described in the Caucasus. As enemy forces withdrew they were replaced by the Whites and by bands of self-styled patriots. Before the country was pacified there was a Polish invasion in 1920, which took the ancient capital of Kiev, and it was not until the end of that year that Bolshevik authority was fully established, and the Ukraine became a semi-independent Soviet state which later became part of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics.

At the outbreak of World War II, the Ukraine, as

distinct from the rest of Russia, had an agricultural production, especially grain, livestock, and sugar, superior to that of any European country, and was second only to Germany and England in heavy industry. The war brought frightful disaster to what had become the most prosperous section of the U.S.S.R., but in its first two years, before Hitler's invasion of Russia, seven million Ukrainians in former Eastern Poland with eighty thousand square miles of territory, and one million in former Rumanian Bessarabia and Bukovina, with some twenty-five thousand square miles, were incorporated in the Soviet Ukrainian Republic.

Khrushchev's first task as Party boss of the Ukraine had been the development of industry and agriculture, but he now was forced to tackle the absorption and political adjustment of this new non-Soviet population. It is notable that he proceeded with caution. Peasant farms in the new areas were not collectivized, although many collective farms were established on the estates of expropriated Polish and Rumanian landlords, and some liberty was retained by private petty industry and commerce. Then Hitler struck and all the energies of the Bolshevik Party were devoted to evacuating as much of the industrial and agricultural wealth of the country as could be moved, and to destroying—the "scorched-earth" policy—what could not.

Once again the Germans set up a puppet government in the Ukraine, some of whose members had acted in a similar capacity twenty-one years before. The Ukrainians simply flouted it, and it was dissolved in a few weeks by the Nazis, who ruled by force of arms. But they failed to reckon with Ukrainian stubbornness. The whole country became the scene of a guerrilla movement which far outshadowed the resistance movements of western Europe, even in the concluding years of the war. Millions of Ukrainians were massacred and deported, but the guerrillas fought so tenaciously that the Germans are said to

have suffered almost half a million casualties and great losses of supplies and war material. It is reckoned that Ukrainian guerrillas totalled nearly a quarter of a million, who were only able to go on fighting by continuous rapid movement and because they had the sympathy and support of the native population. It was Khrushchev's job to co-ordinate the guerrilla movement, and where possible to establish contacts by plane and underground between it and the Red Army. He was given the military rank of Lieutenant-General. Soviet records bear witness to the practical value of the Ukrainian revolt in the years of defeat and during the bitter fighting to reconquer the country.

Khrushchev is also considered to have contributed to the defence of Stalingrad. After the Soviet retreat from the Ukraine in the first year of the war, he became head of the Political Department of the Red Army on the southern front, which later included Stalingrad. According to Soviet custom, the high command of an army is triple, consisting of the commanding general and his chief of staff, who control military operations, and the head of the Political Department.<sup>1</sup> Although the original commanders of the southern front, Budenny and then Timoshenko, were later replaced by younger men, Khrushchev retained his political post throughout.

After the Soviet recovery of the Ukraine in 1943-4, Khrushchev resumed his position as Party boss of the Republic to undertake the greatest task of reconstruction in history. The country was largely depopulated. The cities and towns were rubble, nine-tenths of the railroads were useless. All factories and power plants had been dismantled and dynamited. Three-quarters of the collective farms were a wilderness, with polluted wells, fruit trees cut down, and livestock reduced to a tenth.

The reconstruction programme made good progress despite incredible difficulties until the crop failure of

<sup>1</sup> See Chapter Twenty-one.

1946, caused by the worst drought in fifty years. It was at this point that Khrushchev was replaced by his former chief, Kaganovich, for the latter to do his greatest pinch-hitting job. This was evidently considered no serious reflection on Khrushchev, for he stayed in the Ukraine as head of the government, and a year later was reappointed to the Party post, which he has held ever since.

Khrushchev's present standing in the Politburo is no doubt partly due to his profound knowledge of the age-old feelings of the Ukrainian people in relation to Russians on one side and Poles on the other, which he once expressed as follows in a speech:

"For many centuries the Ukrainian people fought the Czarist autocracy, landlords, and capitalists . . . for the right to develop their native culture, build their own schools, publish their literature and study in their mother-tongue." (Not, be it noted, for political independence.)

Khrushchev is convinced that the Polish masses have similar aspirations, and that the old hostility between Poland and the Ukraine was due to the ambitions and rivalry of their respective "masters." He is an ardent advocate of friendship and co-operation with the Poles, and in the winter of 1945 he headed a delegation of Soviet experts which visited Warsaw to discuss plans for rebuilding the Polish capital. As a result of his mission the government of the U.S.S.R. undertook to meet half the costs of Warsaw's reconstruction.

In this connection it is worth mentioning that when the Soviet-Polish Treaty of Alliance against German aggression was concluded in Moscow in April, 1945, Stalin, who signed it (other such treaties were signed by Molotov as Foreign Minister), declared that Poles and Russians had been enemies for centuries and that mistrust still existed on both sides, which it was now their joint task to dispel by working together for mutual benefit and for the peace of Europe.



## *Chapter Seventeen*

### MALENKOV—THE SECRETARIAT

**G**EORGEY MAXIMILIANOVICH MALENKOV was born in 1902 in Orenburg, south-west of the Ural Mountains. For some reason, nothing is stated in Soviet records about his family or its social position, which leads me to think that they may have been too bourgeois or respectable for Bolshevik standards. At any rate in one of his speeches Malenkov made some sarcastic remarks about people who justified their incompetence by proving that they were of true proletarian origin for three or four generations.

Unlike most of his colleagues whose careers I have described, Malenkov has no pre-Revolutionary background. In the spring of 1919 he enlisted in the Red Army, and he joined the Communist Party a year later. Those were the days of the Red Army offensive against the White General Kolchak, who was swept back from Kazan on the Volga into middle Siberia and executed at Irkutsk in the beginning of 1920.

From the very first, Malenkov took a political rather than a military line, and his advancement was phenomenally rapid: from Commissar of a cavalry squadron in 1919 to head of the Political Department of the Turkestan Army only two years later, at the age of twenty.

Whatever his family and education may have been, it is known that from 1922 to 1925 he lived in Moscow and completed his education, in the Higher Technical School, as it was then called, at State expense, and was secretary of the Party unit in the school.

Somewhere in these years he attracted the notice of Stalin. The official record states that from 1925 to 1930 he was "engaged in responsible work in the apparatus of the Central Committee of the Party," but it is known that he became Stalin's personal secretary, and thus began an intimacy with the Big Chief which has never been broken. It is easy to guess what Malenkov gained from this association in knowledge of the inner workings of Soviet affairs, and in consequence one learns without surprise that he was head of the Organization Department of the Moscow Party from 1930 to 1934, under Kaganovich (then Party boss of Moscow), and from 1934 headed a more important department of the same kind for the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the U.S.S.R. In 1939 Malenkov was elected to the Central Committee and named one of its Secretaries, with Stalin, Zhdanov, and Andreyev.

At this time Malenkov was unknown to the Western world, and foreign observers in Moscow were startled when, in February, 1941, at a nation-wide Conference of the Communist Party, he was called upon to make a key speech on problems of industry and transport, which had prime importance in view of the imminence of war. In this speech, Malenkov, who is a burly, dark-haired fellow with a heavy face and sharp nose, lashed into his assembled comrades in a way that startled them and produced, the record says modestly, "movements of animation" in the hall. He began by attacking the Council of People's Commissars, the governmental Administration no less, when he said, "some of them like to sit in swivel chairs and run things by correspondence." Then he went after the high executives who "study genealogy to pick subordinates by their proletarian ancestry rather than by capacity," and surprised his hearers by saying that among non-Party people (he used the curious phrase, "non-Party *Bolsheviks*") there were many sincere and capable men who had no Communist standing but who worked

better and more conscientiously than many a Communist of long standing.

Next Malenkov let fly against "windbags who arm themselves with catchwords like 'We're getting things organized, but there's a little jam,' or 'There's a trifling delay, but we're getting rid of the snags,' when they're asked why production is lagging below quota." He cited specific cases and came close enough to naming names to rouse further "animation" in the audience.

Then he said: "There's another type of business leader, the ignoramus, the type who knows nothing and doesn't want to know anything. But he is as conceited as they make them and is convinced that there is nothing he does not know and nothing he needs to know. You may talk to him about new methods and tell him his technological process needs improving, or that cleanliness and tidiness are essential in a factory, but he sits there, confirmed in his ignorance and refuses to listen to reason or advice." Again, the audience was "animated."

As a result of this speech, Molotov's wife, Zhemchuzhina, who held the post of Commissar of Fisheries, "retired to private life" and a number of other Commissars were demoted, including Mikhail Kaganovich, the elder brother of the Politburo member. Another result was that the very next day Malenkov was appointed a candidate member of the Politburo.

We foreign observers in Moscow were surprised by Malenkov's emergence at this conference, but were less surprised later to learn that he was one of the original five members of the all-powerful "War Cabinet" formed at the outbreak of hostilities. This does not mean that Malenkov is a probable successor to Stalin, but it indicates that he is one of the first four men in the Soviet Union today.

In the early years of the war Malenkov was put in charge of the production of aircraft. In artillery Russia was as good as or better than the Germans, but its Air

Force was inferior in numbers, and a large part of the American and British planes shipped to Russia was lost by submarine attack in the Atlantic or by German bombers from northern Norway. All in all, about twenty thousand American and British aircraft were shipped to Russia, but little more than half that number reached their destination. All the more vital, therefore, was Malenkov's achievement in driving Russian production up to forty thousand planes a year by 1943, and maintaining that rate until the end of the war, for which he received the title of Hero of Socialist Labour.

In the summer of 1943 the Red Army won the decisive victory of the Kursk salient, which was largely achieved by one of the greatest air battles of all times. In nineteen days, from July 5, when the German attack began, to July 23, the Germans lost 1,392 planes. Then a Soviet counter-offensive started and by August 5 the Red Army had taken the strongly fortified positions of Orel and Belgorod, and was advancing westward to the reconquest of the Ukraine. At this moment, Malenkov was appointed High Commissioner for the reconstruction of all liberated Soviet territory—from the Caucasus to the Baltic Sea—which had had a population of eighty-eight million people.

The Russians had managed to evacuate eastward a considerable quantity of machines, factory equipment, and skilled workers to handle them. Official figures state that 1,300 plants were thus salvaged, but in view of the rapid retreat of the Red armies and the relatively limited character of the Russian transport network, it is doubtful whether more than 10 or 15 per cent of the population could have escaped.

The destruction of towns and cities was terrific. Such great centres as Kiev, Kharkov, Odessa, and Stalingrad were almost totally destroyed, and the damage done in Leningrad was very great. The Russians have made the following estimate of their losses:

*Property Destroyed*

1,700 towns	}	6,000,000 buildings. 25,000,000 people made homeless.
70,000 villages		
32,000 industrial establishments		
40,000 miles of railroad		
4,100 railroad depots		
36,000 post and telegraph offices		

*Agriculture Destroyed*

98,000 collective farms  
 1,875 State farms  
 2,890 machine and tractor stations

*Livestock Killed*

17,000,000 beef and dairy cattle out of 31,000,000	
7,000,000 horses out of 12,000,000	
20,000,000 hogs	} In each case more than half the original total
27,000,000 sheep	
110,000,000 head of poultry	

*Looted or Taken as Scrap for German Steel Furnaces*

137,000 tractors, out of 200,000  
 49,000 harvester combines out of 60,000  
 4,000,000 ploughs  
 265,000 seeders  
 885,000 mowing and threshing machines

Everywhere the enemy wantonly destroyed historical monuments, churches, and museums, as well as 40,000 hospitals, 84,000 schools, and 43,000 libraries. It was indeed a kingdom of chaos that Malenkov was called upon to rule.

In a speech at the beginning of 1946, he said: "Whoever wants to work and can work will find full use of his energies in this vast job of construction. All that is needed is to put our shoulders to the wheel and not be afraid of difficulties, but anyone who thinks he can live by his past services and rest on the laurels of accomplishment is gravely mistaken. The war is over, and now we

must roll up our sleeves and set about healing the wounds which the war inflicted. Those who are complaining about the war to justify their own shortcomings must be told: 'Stop whining, get down to work, and before you know it you won't need to complain. Avoid getting into a rut, and stop living by old formulas.' "

Malenkov also spoke, like Zhdanov, of the need for a new and up-to-date application of Marxist principles. He said: "The finest people of the past were unable to predict everything for us, and we who follow the Marxist teaching must study our contemporary experience of progress and struggle, and incorporate it into day-to-day practical leadership. We are constantly coming up against routine and conservatism. People often say: 'We didn't have it before, we weren't told about it and so we didn't do it.' It is our prime duty to wage an implacable struggle against such lack of initiative. There is much talent in our people, and executives who do not understand this must be removed. Of all the gains we have registered as a result of the recent years of struggle, the most important is that the war has forged new people, new personnel, capable of pushing the work ahead.

"Our friends respect us because we are strong, and will only respect us as long as we are strong. The weak are not respected. If we are respected it means that we shall not be hindered in our task of construction. It is wrong and dangerous to overestimate one's strength, but still worse to underestimate it, because then one is liable to be stricken by panic. We are a mighty force already today, and this should be remembered by those who think that our people shed their blood, made tremendous sacrifices, and won victory in order to let others enjoy its fruits. Let them remember this, and not try to scare us, for it has been proved that our Soviet people are not among the timid."

The concluding sentences sound like a challenge to the West, but Malenkov explained himself further in

September, 1947, at the foundation meeting of the Cominform, near Warsaw. He said: "We [Russians] proceed from the fact that the co-existence of two systems—capitalism and socialism—is inevitable for a long period of time and we follow the line of maintaining loyal, good-neighbourly relations with all states manifesting a desire for friendly co-operation on condition that the principle of reciprocity is observed and that obligations undertaken are fulfilled. . . . But at the same time we are prepared to repel any policy hostile to the Soviet Union, no matter from what quarter it comes."

Made a full member of the Politburo in 1946, Malenkov has gained increasing importance in post-war Soviet activities. He will surely inherit no small part of the mantle of the late Zhdanov, his fellow-member of the small directive body of the Party Secretariat and co-founder of the Cominform. Even before Zhdanov's death, it was Malenkov who signed the message of condolence on behalf of the Russian Communist Party to the Japanese Communists when their leader, Tokuda, was wounded by a would-be assassin. Earlier, Stalin himself had signed a similar message to the Italian party when its leader, Togliatti, was wounded. Malenkov scarcely can be considered a rival to Molotov as Stalin's successor—should a single successor ever be appointed—but his influence is great and growing, particularly through his position in the Secretariat, to which, be it carefully noted, all members of the Politburo, except Bulganin and the two "youngsters," Voznesensky and Kosygin, belonged at one time or another.

## *Chapter Eighteen*

### BERIA—THE PUNITIVE ARM

L AVRENTI PAVLOVICH BERIA was born in 1899 near Sukhum, a seaside resort on the Georgian coast of the Black Sea which was then the Palm Beach of that Russian Florida. Official Soviet records say he was the son of a poor peasant family, which hardly tallies with the fact that he received a first-class education and graduated from the Polytechnical High School in Baku, *cum laude*, as an "architectural and construction technician" at the age of twenty. Baku, Azerbaijan, is nearly as far from Sukhum as Duke University in North Carolina is from Palm Beach in Florida, which is a long distance for the son of a poor peasant to travel in search of knowledge.

Two years before graduation Beria joined the Communist Party in Baku, and is said to have carried on underground and illegal work in the next year or two (as stated in the earlier chapter about Mikoyan, Baku at that time was ruled by an anti-Bolshevik coalition). Nevertheless, he was able to graduate in 1919, which again seems curious unless Master Beria was unusually astute in dodging the police, as may well have been the case. In 1920, after the Bolshevik seizure of Baku by the Kirov-Orjonikidze expedition, which Mikoyan joined in Mak-hach Kala, Beria was sent to Georgia to do "intelligence" work, not only for the Party organization but also for the army which had captured Baku. He doubtless owed this appointment to Mikoyan, under whom he had worked in Baku during the previous two years.

In 1921 he entered the service of the Cheka (Secret



Police and Intelligence). He chose this as a career as distinct from the *special* Cheka jobs which were often allotted, as explained earlier, to Communists of all ranks. In the next ten years he rose to be assistant chief of the Azerbaijan (Baku) Cheka, then assistant chief of the Georgian Cheka, then chief of the Georgian G.P.U. (or "Gaypayoo," a later name for the Cheka), and finally chief of the G.P.U. of the entire Caucasus—Azerbaijan, Georgia, and Armenia.

These ten years, especially the first five or six, were full of trouble and revolt in the Caucasus. In 1924, for instance, there was a rebellion in Georgia which reached alarming proportions, although it was quickly and bloodily suppressed and received little notice in foreign newspapers. After that the going was easier, and Beria was able to take part in the First Five-Year Plan for the growth of industry and agriculture. Since the former bourgeois enemies had been stamped out, and the opposition within the Communist Party was not yet regarded as a dangerous fifth column, Beria was moved from his G.P.U. job in 1931 to become Party Secretary (i.e., boss) of the Caucasian area. He held this post for seven years, which was a time of intense activity and progress in the Caucasus. Perhaps the greatest single achievement was the draining of the marshes of Colchida, reputedly the land of Jason's Golden Fleece, which today produces the same prolific crops as the bottomlands of Florida around Lake Okeechobee.

During these years Beria had two main spheres of activity. He directed the heavy and continuous investment of U.S.S.R. money from the centre, as dictated by the Five-Year Plan, in the Caucasian countries, for the development of industry and agriculture. (This was a direct reversal of the Czarist policy, which had treated the Caucasus and Central Asia as colonies from which wealth was drained.) His second task, dear to the heart of Stalin, his fellow-Georgian, was the application of Stalin's solu-

tion of the national problem in the most mixed-national section of the U.S.S.R., if not of the whole world.

For his work in both these fields Beria received the highest civil decorations the Soviet had to offer, and in 1934 was elected a member of the Central Committee of the Party, but it was not until the summer of 1938 that he became a national figure. That was at the height of the Purge, which had reached such frenzy that Russia was almost breaking under Stalin's hand. I have told elsewhere how Voroshilov and Kaganovich, horrified by the collapse of initiative and discipline in the army and heavy industry, flew in hot haste to Matsesta, Stalin's vacation villa, where they found him in conference with Beria, who had made a report to his chief along similar lines. Immediately, Beria was appointed Vice-Commissar of the N.K.V.D. (another name for the G.P.U., as G.P.U. was another name for the Cheka, without much change in function) and immediately set to work to repair the damage, if possible, that had been wrought by the sadist lunatic, Yezhov, who remained nominal chief of the N.K.V.D. until December.

Beria's attitude towards the Purge was clear from the outset. His first official act was to execute five important N.K.V.D. officials in the Ukraine, appointed by Yezhov, for criminal abuse of power in connection with the Purge. This was only the first step in the "purging of the purgers" as it was called, which Beria carried out with vigour. In December, he was appointed Commissar of the N.K.V.D. in place of Yezhov, who disappeared early the next year and was said to have met the fate he had inflicted upon so many others.

Meanwhile, Beria undertook a wholesale revision of all cases of expulsion from the Party. According to figures published regarding the provinces of Moscow and Leningrad, more than 50 per cent of persons expelled were reinstated on the grounds that the action taken against them had been unjustified, based upon slander or other

false premisses. Thousands of exiles were brought back to their homes and former positions for the same reason, but no one could bring back the dead, who also numbered thousands. The newspapers were full of fantastic stories of men and women, often high-placed, who had been purged for reasons of personal gain, envy, jealousy, or sheer malice. One read how presumably reputable Communists had engaged in "socialist competition" as to who could denounce the greatest number of malignants. Particularly flagrant were reports of Communists with doubtful pasts who had shielded themselves by their zeal in denouncing innocent comrades. Apparently it had been enough to attach the term "enemy of the people" to anyone for his fate to be sealed.

In a speech at the Party Congress of the following March (1939), Beria went so far as to attack the tendency of people to blame failure in various branches of the economy upon hostile and disruptive forces, instead of realizing that they were due to poor management and execution. Immediately after the same Congress he was elected a candidate member of the Politburo, although he did not receive full membership until 1946. During his stay in Georgia, he had written a book on the *Bolshevik Organizations in the Trans-Caucasus*, based largely on his access, as G.P.U. chief, to Czarist police files, in which he laid great emphasis upon the activities of Stalin during the pre-revolutionary period. No one has ever doubted that Beria has been a devout Stalinist at all times.

Beria is a man of middle height, clean-shaven, with scholarly features, high forehead, shrewd, piercing eyes behind pince-nez, firm mouth, and aquiline nose. He speaks precisely, with few gestures, and rarely refers to notes. As head of the N.K.V.D. he played a large part in the modernization of Russia, especially in the building of railroads, canals, roads, and similar public works. Whatever may be the truth about the exact number of prisoners, political and criminal, before and after the war, the

N.K.V.D. is almost certainly the largest single employer of labour in the world.

When war broke out, Beria was one of the original five members of the State Committee of Defence ("Inner War Cabinet"), and in 1943 was given the highest Soviet honour, Hero of Socialist Labour, for his work in raising the output of armaments and munitions. In 1946 he was named Vice-Premier, and resigned his post as Minister of the Interior. The announcement of this change and of his successor contained the cryptic phrase that Beria would henceforth devote himself principally "to his *main work*," without further explanation. One may presume the said work to be the supervision, in the Politburo and the highest Government body, of the two ministries of Interior and State Security. This is in accordance with the present trend, which I mentioned earlier, for members of the Politburo each to have a specialized function.

There is a tendency in the West to believe that Beria, as overlord of the Ministry of the Interior, with its innumerable activities and large force of highly disciplined troops, might be Stalin's successor, or might already be "the power behind the throne" and actual master of Russia. In support of this view it is argued that Communist infiltration in a satellite country—Czechoslovakia, for instance, or Rumania—begins by the appointment of a Communist as Minister of the Interior, which controls the police and the appointment of local officials. It is true, moreover, that one of the charges against Yagoda, former chief of the G.P.U., who was shot for treason in 1938, was that he planned to use his position to carry out a "palace coup" against Stalin, although he apparently made no effort to put his plan into execution.

In the case of Beria, however, there are several most important factors which cannot be ignored, as follows:

(a) Stalin's great prestige and Beria's personal loyalty to him, which has never been questioned.

(b) Beria's control of the Ministry of the Interior and its subordinate organizations is now more indirect than before.

(c) Beria is not, at present, one of the leading members of the Secretariat, that subtle inner core of Stalin's strength, although, like nearly all his Politburo colleagues, he formerly belonged to it, as Party Secretary of the Caucasus, and is well aware of its power.

(d) Precisely because the *position* of Ministry of the Interior has such vast potentialities, its occupant is inevitably surrounded by all manner of checks and safeguards.

(e) Despite Western opinion to the contrary, all available evidence indicates that the Politburo is a solid, tight-knit unit under Stalin's full control.

## *Chapter Nineteen*

### VOZNESENSKY—STATE PLANNING

NIKOLAI ALEXEYEVICH VOZNESENSKY, the son of a white-collar worker, was born in the province of Tula, south of Moscow, December 1, 1903. He and Kosygin are the only two of the top Russian leaders who are completely products of the Soviet era. Only fourteen at the time of the Revolution, he joined the Communist Youth Organization in his rural native county two years later, and was sufficiently active to be sent in 1921 to the Sverdlovsk Party University for a higher education. He graduated in 1924, and for several years was a Party official in the Donets mining area. Later he took a post-graduate course in economics at the Institute of Red Professors in Moscow, which then was the chief training school of Marxist theoreticians. He completed the course in 1931 and later received a Ph.D. For the next three years he was a professor at the institute and in 1934 its President, at the age of thirty-one.

During these years it is clear that Voznesensky was quietly building up a first-class reputation, because in 1935 he was selected by Zhdanov, who had become Party boss of Leningrad after the murder of Kirov, to head the commission in charge of economic planning there. The industrial expansion of Leningrad at this time was second only to that of Moscow, and the city provided one-tenth of the entire heavy industry output of the U.S.S.R. Since then it would seem that Voznesensky has had a relationship with Zhdanov not unlike that of Malenkov with Stalin, as protégé and friend. In 1938 he was made

Chairman of the State Planning Commission of the U.S.S.R. (Gosplan), which carried cabinet rank in the Council of Commissars.

The Gosplan, as a department of the Soviet Government, has had curious ups and downs. Lenin originally conceived it as one of the key branches of government, and if the average intelligent foreigner were asked how the Russian system differs most from the systems of the West, he might well reply that the Russians claim to have a planned economy. The world knows the vast publicity with which the First Five-Year Plan was launched in 1928, and how it was succeeded by the Second and Third Five-Year Plans (the latter interrupted by the war) and now by the current Fourth Plan. Between the death of Lenin, however, and the First Plan, the department was much in abeyance, and it was not until the First Five-Year Plan had begun to produce results, that is, by 1930, that it began to regain importance.

In the middle thirties, before Voznesensky's appointment, the Gosplan seems to have been too theoretical, in that it did not take sufficient account of practical developments in various branches of industry. It is also possible that its prestige was lowered by oppositionists in its ranks. At any rate, Voznesensky promptly put the department on a new and more solid basis. Henceforth its functions were and are today: (a) to lay out the programme of long-range (Five-Year) economic development, (b) to co-ordinate and keep in line the respective branches of industry, just as a commanding general prevents one or another division from advancing too fast or lagging behind, in order to maintain a uniform front, (c) to check on the month-to-month progress of every phase of the national economy. That was Voznesensky's contribution. It restored the Gosplan to high level in the Soviet system, won him the Order of Lenin, membership in the Central Committee of the Party in 1939, and in 1941 the position of candidate member of the Politburo, and the new and specially created

post of Vice-Premier for Economic Affairs. In 1942 he was appointed to the State Committee of Defence ("Inner War Cabinet"), which was expanded from the original five to a membership of eight. He became a full member of the Politburo in 1947.

Although Voznesensky is the only member of the ruling group in Moscow who is a member of the Academy of Sciences by virtue of his scholastic achievements (Stalin and Molotov are honorary members), there is little of the professor in his appearance. A big, hearty, full-faced man with a shock of black hair, he looks more like a labourer than the scholar he is. Of necessity his speeches, dealing with economics, lack sparkle, but are lucid and convincing—so much so that each of his three notable speeches in the last decade have coincided with and probably accounted for his promotion to a higher rank.

In his speech at the Eighteenth Party Congress of March, 1939, after which he was elected a member of the Central Committee, Voznesensky discussed the Third Five-Year Plan, for which he was primarily responsible. This plan differed from the two which preceded it in several ways. To begin with, the speaker and his hearers knew that the shadow of war loomed dark over Europe, and most of them must have guessed that the plan would never be carried to a peaceful conclusion. Indeed, I was told in Moscow at that time that it had been revised almost at the eleventh hour to meet the coming emergency. Accordingly, Voznesensky spoke of dispersion of industry, of smaller plants and regional independence. For instance, new power plants were to be of 25,000 to 50,000 kilowatts capacity, rather than 50,000 to 100,000 as before. New coal mines were planned for an annual production of 200,000 to 300,000 tons per annum rather than 600,000 to 700,000. Auto factories were to produce 30,000 to 40,000 cars a year instead of 100,000 to 200,000, and thus right along the line. He also stressed the need to build new plants as close as possible to sources



of their raw materials, to avoid the previous long hauls of such products as coal and iron, which in some cases had been as great as three thousand miles. Finally—an obvious pointer to the war danger—the increase of capital investment in Siberia and the Far East was far greater than before and greater than population figures would seem to warrant.

Voznesensky's second major speech was delivered at the Eighteenth Conference of the Communist Party in February, 1941, four months before Hitler's attack, and it is noteworthy that the other principal speaker at this conference was Malenkov, only two years older than Voznesensky, who was then thirty-seven. Voznesensky said: "Modern war is a war of engines. Engines require a high level of technique and large quantities of oil and non-ferrous metals. The Soviet Union cannot close its eyes to these technical and economic features of modern warfare, and is taking measures to equip its national economy with modern technique and generally to keep the country in a proper state of preparedness."

He then went on to show the great strides which Soviet industry and agriculture had made in recent years, and continued: "Our new [Third] Five-Year Plan confronts the following problems:

"1. To consolidate our economic independence. We cannot be dependent upon foreigners, especially as regards metallurgy and machine-building.

"2. To maintain our development upon socialist lines.

"3. To prevent any disproportion between the various branches of the national economy, and to increase State reserves to meet emergencies."

Voznesensky went on to show how improvements could be made by reducing production costs and cutting down overhead expenses, both in industry and agriculture. He concluded by giving a striking table of the increase in skill (workers) and education (intellectuals) between the

years 1926 and 1939, when the population increased by 16 per cent, as follows:

(a) <i>Workers:</i>		<i>Increase in number:</i>
Mechanics		3.7 times
Turners		6.8 „
Millwrights	13.0	„
Locomotive engineers	4.4	„
Plasterers	7.0	„
Tractor drivers	215.0	„
(b) <i>Intellectuals:</i>		
Engineers	7.7	„
Agronomists	8.0	„
Scientists	7.1	„
Teachers	3.5	„
Physicians	2.3	„

As I have said, the Third Five-Year Plan was interrupted by a war which can be reckoned to have set back Russian economic progress at least eight years. Personally I should have been inclined to name a longer period, because of the tremendous damage done by the Germans in Russia's richest industrial and agricultural regions, but figures for October, 1947, showed that over-all production had then reached the monthly average of 1940, and according to the London *Economist*, taking the index figure for 1940 as 100, the equivalent figure for 1948 was 114.

Voznesensky's greatest triumph came in his speech on the Fourth Five-Year Plan before the Congress of the U.S.S.R. in March, 1946. I have implied earlier that he owed his promotion to his speeches. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that he owed his promotion to the successful work he had done in the period prior to the delivery of his speeches, and that the speeches were a summary and explanation of that work. So, now, in 1946, Voznesensky put before the Congress his programme for post-war reconversion and reconstruction.

The Congress approved and accepted it, but a year was still to elapse in which the programme was tested by results before he received the ultimate reward of full membership in the Politburo on February 27, 1947. Although every member of the Politburo nowadays has a speciality, Voznesensky is the only one of them who won admission to its ranks because he *was* a specialist (economic planning).

There is a striking, and at first sight startling, similarity between his 1946 speech and that of 1941. Despite the defeat of Germany and Japan, the 1946 speech also takes into account the possibility of war. The Fourth Plan requires a further dispersion of industry by prohibiting large new industrial construction in the major cities of the U.S.S.R. Voznesensky said: "One should not forget that monopolistic capitalism is capable of breeding new aggressors." This may be taken as a typical case of Russian suspiciousness, directed, perhaps, against the United States, but it must also apply to the fear of a revived Germany, which is still a cardinal factor in Soviet foreign policy. This is shown by Voznesensky's next sentence: "To avert new aggression it is necessary to disarm the aggressive nations completely, to place them under military and economic control, and to make of the United Nations an organ which will guard world peace and security."

The speaker evidently did not feel complete confidence in the United Nations, because he went on to say: "We must strengthen the armed forces of the Soviet Union . . . provide them with the most modern equipment, and build up the military and economic power of the Soviet State." On the other hand, the national budget of the U.S.S.R. for the year 1948, allotted only 17 per cent of the total expenditure to military purposes, as compared with more than 50 per cent in the war years, 33 per cent in 1941 (on the eve of the Russo-German War) and with 17 per cent in 1937.

This reduction shows that Voznesensky's statement about strengthening the armed forces must refer to quality rather than quantity, and in any case, the comparison of Russian estimated production for 1950, not yet reached, with American wartime figures, is illuminating. It is as follows, in metric tons:

	<i>U.S.S.R. (planned 1950)</i>	<i>U.S.A. (1944)</i>
Iron	19,500,000	55,000,000
Steel	25,400,000	80,000,000
Coal	250,000,000	616,000,000
Oil	35,400,000	206,000,000

## *Chapter Twenty*

# THE CANDIDATES

SHVERNIK—LABOUR UNIONS  
BULGANIN—NATIONAL DEFENCE  
KOSYGIN—FINANCE

### SHVERNIK

NIKOLAI MIKHAILOVICH SHVERNIK is the titular head of the Soviet State, a position which corresponds to that of the King of England or President of France, although he is still only a candidate member of the Politburo (since 1939). His speciality in the Politburo is to represent the trade unions, with which he has been connected throughout his career. He was born in St. Petersburg (Leningrad) in 1888, son of a night-watchman, and spent his early years in an orphan asylum, where he had four years of rudimentary education, apparently all he ever received. His formal schooling, therefore, was in sharp contrast to that of such younger men as Malenkov and Voznesensky, who, a quarter of a century later, after the Revolution, were given a full education by the State.

At fourteen Shvernik went to work as apprentice in an electrical-equipment plant, and three years later joined the Bolshevik wing of the Social-Democratic Labour Party in the revolutionary year of 1905. For the next ten years, like Stalin and many of the older Bolsheviks, his life was a series of arrests, imprisonments, exiles, and escapes, but unlike them he seems to have been a worker engaged in revolutionary activities rather than a revolutionary engaged in organizing workers.

After the abdication of the Czar he was elected head of the labour union (which then became legal) in the tube mill at Samara on the Volga, and later in the same year became chairman of the All-Russian Union of Artillery Workers, in Petrograd. Shortly after the Revolution he returned to Samara and, at the age of twenty-nine, became head of the city soviet, or mayor. When Samara was captured by the anti-Soviet forces during the Civil War, Shvern timer took to the woods with a partisan detachment and was political commissar of a regiment in the struggle against the White General Denikin.

At the close of the Civil War, he returned to the trade union field and became chief of the metalworkers' union in the Donets region of the Ukraine. Two years later he entered the Council of Commissars as Commissar of a department called the Peasants' and Workers' Inspection. His predecessor in this post was Stalin, with whom he thus came into contact.

Shvern timer was Commissar for two years and also worked in the Central Control Commission of the Party, which has always been a highly responsible job reserved for tried and trusted Communists. His big chance came, as it did to many others, when Zinoviev swung the Leningrad Party machine to the Trotskyite opposition in 1925. Shvern timer was a Party Secretary in Leningrad at that time, but Zinoviev, as President of the Comintern, Politburo member, and one of Lenin's closest associates, was Party boss of the former capital. Although he was unable to prevent Zinoviev's coup, Shvern timer contributed enough to its eventual failure to be elected to the Central Committee of the Party and a member of its Secretariat under Stalin, to whose mast he nailed his flag against the opposition.

For the next two or three years he was in charge of the Party organization in the Ural mining and industrial region, and in 1929 was made head of the Metalworkers' Union, which had 1,200,000 members. Here again he

took strong action against the Bukharinite opposition. In 1930 he succeeded one of Bukharin's fellow-oppositionists, Tomsy, who later committed suicide, as head of the entire Soviet labour movement, Chairman of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions. Shvernik held this post for fifteen years, during which time the membership of the trade unions in Russia grew from twelve to twenty-seven millions.

The status of trade unions in the Soviet system was really decided by Lenin during the "Workers' Opposition" crisis described in an earlier chapter,<sup>1</sup> but when Tomsy became chief of the All-Union Central Council, he tried to revive the theory that the unions should still be chiefly concerned, as in a capitalist society, with protecting the interests of the workers against their employers, although in Russia the employer was the State. Shvernik went back to Lenin's decision that it could no longer be a question of conflict between workers and employers, precisely because the employer was the State, that is, the whole Russian people including the workers themselves. He expressed it in a speech:

"Our unions carry out the demands of Lenin that they must be the 'immediate assistants' of the Government, which is led by the class-conscious vanguard of the working class, the Communist Party. The unions are in general a school of communism, but they must be, particularly, the school for the management of socialist industry, for the workers of the country as a mass." Shvernik concluded: "Tomsy's theories can only be applied to a capitalist country, and not to the Soviet Union and its working class."

As Shvernik said, the modern Russian concept of trade unions is quite different from that of John L. Lewis, who may be surprised to learn that membership in Russian unions is not compulsory, that there is no "closed shop," and that some 15 per cent of Soviet workers do not belong to any union at all.

<sup>1</sup> See page 130.

In 1937 Shvernik was elected to the Council of Nationalities of the Soviet Congress, which corresponds to the American Senate in that it is elected on a regional basis, and in the following year became Chairman of that council. In 1939 he was chosen a candidate member of the Politburo. During the war he also served as head of a special State Committee to investigate German war crimes, but continued as Chairman of the trade union council to provide and direct the flow of labour into war industry, which earned him the Order of Lenin.

In the early war years he took part in the formation of the Anglo-Soviet Trade Union Committee, which was a forerunner of the present World Federation of Trade Unions, and visited London as chief of a Soviet delegation to the British unions. In 1944 he was appointed chief assistant—virtually Vice-President—to the ill and ageing Kalinin, who was then titular head of the Soviet State. When the latter resigned in 1946 shortly before his death, Shvernik replaced him, and in 1948 was awarded another Order of Lenin on his sixtieth birthday.

In appearance Shvernik is a thickset, shortish man with a round, pleasant face, cleanshaven save for a clipped, greying moustache. His daughter, an electrical engineer in her twenties, worked on a Soviet Purchasing Commission in the United States in 1946.

In Russia where men of power are remote from the populace, Shvernik has maintained Kalinin's tradition of receiving all and sundry and hearing their tales of woe. At a time when the Kremlin was as inaccessible and guarded by armed sentries as it is today, I remember that Kalinin's office, outside the ancient fortress, held open house for suppliants, however humble. An American agency correspondent in Moscow recently spoke of Shvernik in almost the same terms. He said: "His office, outside the Kremlin, is thronged with people, waiting in lines from early morning. They wait there with anxious faces, but I noticed that when they come out from their talk with the President, they look contented."



## BULGANIN

Nikolai Alexandrovich Bulganin, born in 1895, was the son of a white-collar worker. Little is known of his early life, but he seems to have received some education. He joined the Bolshevik Party in 1917, in time to take part in the Civil War against the Czech and White Russian forces in Siberia. Even among Soviet executives, who flit like moths from pillar to post, Bulganin is distinguished by the number and variety of jobs he has held. In the early years of the Revolution he acted as a Cheka (Intelligence and Police) officer in Nizhnii Novgorod, Central Asia, and Moscow. In 1922 he became head of the construction department, and later manager of the largest Soviet electrical-equipment plant, Elektrozavod, in Moscow, where he remained until 1931. This plant completed its assignment under the First Five-Year Plan in two and a half years, which won for Bulganin the Order of Lenin. His official biography has the rather strange phrase, "In these years Bulganin completed his education 'on the run' from the technical experts under him."

At that time the Party boss of Moscow was Kaganovich, who always had a sharp eye for competent administrators, and it was perhaps on that account that Bulganin was elected Mayor of Moscow (Chairman of the city soviet) in 1931, a post he held for six years of great industrial activity. From 1933 to 1937 Bulganin, as Mayor, was in direct charge of subway construction, first under Kaganovich and later under Khrushchev, a work which involved two and a half times as much excavation and concrete-laying as the gigantic Dnieper Dam project.

It was at about this time that I met Bulganin personally at a lunch I have previously mentioned, which was given for the French and British experts who had worked on the subway. Before that I had been in touch with his office for a somewhat trivial reason—although it mattered to me. I was living in an apartment in the southern part

of Moscow which I had rented from a group of Nep-men (private builders). When they were eliminated in the late twenties and their property expropriated, the soviet of that section of the city demanded my apartment and, when I refused to leave it, sued me in the People's Court. Theoretically, I conducted my own case, but I was allowed the advice of a lawyer, appointed by the court, who helped me in a most ingenious way. He began by telling the court that he was there primarily as an interpreter, because my knowledge of Russian was not equal to that of my opponents. Second, he said, which enchanted me, that the local soviet had leased the building in which my apartment was located to one of the large national "trusts," called Metal-Import, whose lawyer was present in court. My lawyer spoke up: "Comrade Judge, what do we see here? A great industrial organization using its prestige and the skill of its legal advisers to attack this blameless individual. I have yet to learn," he added, "that foreigners do not possess the same rights as Soviet citizens in our courts. Mister [he used the English word] Duranty has a three years' lease and has paid his rent on the dot. I submit that this great trust has no right to expel him from his home."

The court thought so too, and gave me six months' extension of my tenure, but the trust was persevering, and finally I appealed to the office of Bulganin, as Chairman of the city soviet. I did not see him in person, but obtained a paper signed by him that I could keep my apartment until I could find another of equivalent size at equivalent rates, which was quite impossible in Moscow in those days, so I stayed on unmolested thereafter.

When I met Bulganin at the lunch for the subway experts, I mentioned this episode about my apartment and thanked him for his decision in my favour. He fingered his little goatee—incidentally he is the only Politburo member whose chin is not clean-shaven—and looked at me with mild, shrewd eyes. He is a man of

middle height, with none of the hardness of features one might expect in a Bolshevik leader, rather like a small-town American banker who has learned to appraise individuals as well as money. He said: "There were lots of cases like yours, Soviet theatre people and writers and artists who had acquired apartments in good faith from private builders and were menaced by expulsion. Like yourself, they didn't have the backing of a large State organization, but I did not think it fair that they or you should lose living quarters on that account."

In the next year, 1938, Bulganin was suddenly switched to chairmanship of the State Bank of the U.S.S.R., which carried with it the rank of Commissar, a position in the Cabinet, and vice-premiership in the Union. The chairmanship of the Bank was a position of singular importance, and it is no small tribute to Bulganin's ability that it was entrusted to a man who had no special economic or financial training.

In the first years after the Revolution the Bolsheviks did not seem to know just what they wanted to do about money. At the beginning there was a more or less deliberate attempt to abolish it altogether, but that was ended by the introduction of the New Economic Policy (N.E.P.) in 1921, when the first steps were taken to put things back on a profit-and-loss basis. It was not, however, until the Five-Year Plans were in action that the Bolsheviks realized the necessity for a practical banking system not very different from that of a capitalist society. They had learned that banks were not the invention of a capitalist demon to enslave the worthy worker, but an essential means by which any society could keep its accounts straight.

By the middle thirties, under the Second Five-Year Plan, the State Bank had become the financial heart of the Soviet Union, with more than three thousand branches. It had sole charge of the emission of currency; it received, in the final instance, all tax payments: two vastly important

functions which in the United States are reserved to the Treasury. In addition it was the central fount from which industry and agriculture drew loans for current expenses, although there were other banks, notably the Agricultural Bank and the Industrial Bank, also with a huge network of branches, which financed new construction in their respective fields. In short, the State Bank of the U.S.S.R. is a combination of the United States Treasury Department and the "Big Five" banks in England under the present nationalization system. Finally, the State Bank floats internal loans in Russia and is the repository of the national gold reserve.

In 1939 Bulganin was elected to the Central Committee of the Communist Party, having become head of its Foreign Affairs Committee in 1938, in which year he was a delegate to the Council of Nationalities. When the Germans approached Moscow in the fall of 1941, Bulganin, as ex-Mayor, was appointed Political Commissar of the armies defending that front, under Marshals Timoshenko and Zhukov. Then, in December, 1942, after Moscow's successful defence, he was given the military rank of Lieutenant-General, and, in November, 1944, was further promoted to full General of the Army, a rank second only to that of the Marshals. At that time, Voroshilov, one of the original members of the eight-man "Inner War Cabinet," was sent to the Far East to prepare the Russian attack on Manchuria, and Bulganin took his place. He became a candidate member of the Politburo in March, 1946, and succeeded Stalin as Minister of the Armed Forces, when the Generalissimo relinquished that post.

The war was two years over and Stalin doubtless felt that the post of defence minister was no longer so important in peace-time, but, in the eyes of the Russian nation, the fact that Bulganin succeeded Stalin added immensely to his prestige, as did his promotion to Marshal, the only man without high military experience to receive that honour.

In two ways Bulganin's appointment was significant. First, Stalin's relinquishment of the post of defence minister showed that he no longer considered it of cardinal value. Second, the fact that Bulganin got the job rather than a soldier showed that Russia wants a good business executive in charge of military affairs, to run the army efficiently and maintain its quality on a greatly reduced budget. Both these points would indicate that Russia is less aggressive or war-minded than some foreigners suppose.

#### KOSYGIN

Alexey Nikolayevich Kosygin was only a boy of twelve when the Bolsheviks seized power in 1917. In consequence he had no pre-Revolutionary background or Civil War career, and the official records say nothing about his social origin or upbringing, except that he was born in 1905. The records also do not give the date when he joined the Communist Party, but it may be presumed that he received a State education, joined the Communist Youth, worked hard and was given higher schooling, and then joined the Communist Party. In appearance he is slim and sharp-featured and closely resembles the world reporter and war correspondent, H. R. Knickerbocker.

Kosygin first came into prominence in 1938, when he was appointed Commissar of Textiles, an industry which was lagging far behind its production programme. At the All-Union Party Congress in 1939 he reported on his first year's work in a speech which throws interesting light on the problems Russia has to face in industry as a whole and the methods used to solve them. After indicating Russia's backwardness and weakness in the textile industry as compared with Britain and the United States, not only in amount of machinery but in average production of the individual worker, Kosygin stressed the existing disproportion between spinning and weaving machinery,

the failure to keep machinery in good repair, and the tendency to level wages in a way that reduced incentive. He laid down a programme for bringing textile output up to the goals set by the Third Five-Year Plan, as follows:

1. To standardize the building of mills so as to speed their construction.
2. To pattern new mills on the American practice of ordering each mill in its entirety from one source, rather than from separate firms.
3. To make greater use of local materials so as to avoid delay and transportation costs.
4. To insist upon fulfilment of the Plan in specific detail for each plant and for each worker and for every branch of production, rather than by over-all output in terms of yards or roubles.
5. To bring all new mills planned into operation at the scheduled date. This is obvious, but the fact that Kosygin had to mention it speaks for itself.
6. To expand textile machinery output to make all types needed in adequate quantity, and to develop the manufacture of this machinery in Siberia.

At this point he turned to the Chairman of the State Planning Commission, Voznesensky, with the demand that electric power should be "harmonized" with textile machinery. He made similar requests from the heads of the machine-producing industry and the building industry: that they respectively assume full responsibility for prompt delivery of all types of equipment and for the erection of power plants. He urged the Commissariat of Agriculture to improve the quality of flax, cotton, wool, and silk, and told the educational authorities to provide more and better-trained textile specialists.

Kosygin's speech, with its implied criticisms of his colleagues, was evidently well received, because at the conclusion of the congress he was elected to the Central

Committee of the Party. In the following year, 1940, he was promoted to the position of Chairman of all the consumer-goods industries with the rank of Vice-Premier in the Council of People's Commissars. A year later he was transferred to the post of Premier of Russia proper (Russian Soviet Federated Socialist Republic), the largest of the sixteen republics which form the Soviet Union, with one hundred million population. His first post-war speech, before the Congress of the R.S.F.S.R., reported by *Pravda* on June 8, 1945, gives a picture of the governmental system of the Republics as distinct from that of the Union as a whole. Kosygin criticized various provincial administrations for their failure to debate properly questions put before them, and for their tendency to settle matters by snap decision, in short, for undemocratic methods. On the other hand, he expressed willingness to receive criticism from local bodies and promised that various complaints would be carefully investigated. He demanded greater co-operation between the different regions and provinces—one might almost call them "states" in the American sense—of the Russian Federated Republic, as, for instance, in the construction of a pipe-line to bring natural gas from the South Ural field to Moscow through the "states" of Ryazan, Tambov, and Saratov. Kosygin devoted much attention to relations between the budgets of the different "states" and the federal budget, which provoked a lively give-and-take in the meeting. This is interesting in view of the fact that in 1948 he became Minister of Finance for the whole Soviet Union.

This promotion brought with it admission to the Politburo as a candidate member, the first time that any Finance Minister has risen so high in Bolshevik ranks. The fact that Voznesensky, Chief of the State Planning Commission, is a full member, and Kosygin a candidate member, seems to prove that the Bolsheviks have finally managed to round out their political and economic system at the highest levels. The Politburo has changed

from its original function as a small group of political leaders to that of a managing board of a socialist or collectivist society, in which every phase of national interest, from foreign affairs to finance, is represented. It must also be remembered that the Soviet budget, which Kosygin as Finance Minister prepares, is a very different thing from the budgets of the Western Democracies. In Russia *every item* of national economy from the biggest of factories to the smallest of collective farms, from the greatest of power plants to the smallest provincial store, is provided for and accounted for in the federal budget. Thus a statement published by Kosygin as Finance Minister in 1948 covers everything from industrial and agricultural production to the retail prices of consumer goods. He was explaining specifically how a new State loan of 20,000,000,000 roubles would be used during the reconstruction period. He said that the budget reckoned upon an income for 1948 of 429,000,000,000 roubles, and an expenditure of 388,000,000,000. The balance, some 41,000,000,000 roubles, would not be devoted to reducing internal debt, but would be held as a capital reserve.

He provided some interesting facts and figures, as follows:

1. The total output of industry in 1947 increased by 22 per cent over the previous year, but the production in light industry (consumer goods) increased by 33 per cent. This is the first time in Soviet history that the increase in consumer goods has outstripped that of industry as a whole, and bears witness to the acute need for such goods and to the fact that this need is realized by the rulers of Russia.

2. The number of workers and employees, apart from agriculture, increased by two million in the first quarter of 1948 over the same period of 1947, which shows that jobs were being found for demobilized soldiers.



3. As a result of the currency reform, the purchasing power of the rouble increased, Kosygin declared, by 41 per cent in the first quarter of 1948, which, he added, meant a rise of 51 per cent in real wages as compared with the first quarter of 1947.

Inasmuch as over-all industrial production had only just reached the pre-war level, Kosygin's claim for the improvement of real wages cannot mean more than an improvement over the immediate post-war years, which were exceedingly tough in Russia, rather than over the pre-war period. I imagine the same applies to his other claims for current price reductions.

4. In the current budget, 15 per cent of the total national expenditure is devoted to education, as compared with 17 per cent for national defence.

## *Chapter Twenty-one*

# THE POLITBURO AND THE ARMY

**A**LTHOUGH Russia has emerged victoriously from a war in which its military commanders proved themselves equal to the best the Germans had to offer, there is no soldier in the Politburo save Voroshilov. And Voroshilov, though, as we have seen, he led guerrilla forces in action shortly after the Revolution and later commanded Red Army detachments, notably in the defence of Tsaritsyn (Stalingrad), won his reputation later, in the Civil War and during the war with Poland in 1920, as political commissar rather than field commander. In World War II he was for a short time commander of the armies on the North-western Front, that is the Baltic States, the Russo-Finnish frontier, and the approaches to Leningrad, but was relieved of this post before the end of 1941 and became a military elder statesman without any apparent loss of prestige in the Politburo or in Stalin's long-time friendship.

At present he has no direct connection with the armed forces except as a military elder statesman—as might, for instance, be the case should Eisenhower become a member of the American Cabinet in any capacity save defence minister. Bulganin, not Voroshilov, today is Soviet Minister of Defence, and he, although vested with the rank of marshal, is really only a civilian in uniform.

Why, it may be asked, is it that such eminent figures in the Soviet picture as Marshal Zhukov, who took Berlin, and Marshal Vasilevsky, the lightning conqueror of Manchuria, have no place in the highest ruling body of

the U.S.S.R.? The first and obvious answer is that they are professional soldiers, whereas the Politburo is, as its name implies, an assembly of professional politicians. But the real reasons go deeper. During my early years in Moscow I was repeatedly told that Lenin, when in exile, made a minute and careful study of revolutions, from that of Spartacus in Rome in the first century before Christ, through the Wat Tyler peasant revolt in England and the similar French Jacquerie, on to the Cromwellian Revolution in England and the French Revolution of 1789. From this study and from his own experience in the abortive revolutionary movement of 1905-7 in Russia, Lenin learned that revolutions were doomed to failure if they were resolutely opposed by the army.

For the success of a revolution, Lenin found, it was necessary for army discipline to have been shattered by defeat in war—as happened in Russia prior to 1917—or for the army to be won over sufficiently to stand aloof in the struggle between the revolutionaries and the regime in power, or to aid the former. A further point, I was told, which Lenin bore in mind, was the danger that a successful revolution, like those which cost the crowned heads of Charles I of England and Louis XVI of France, might become a military regime, as under Cromwell and Napoleon, because of the power obtained by the army in the conflicts which inevitably accompanied or followed the overthrow of established authority. A case in point, which at the moment of writing seems to be causing some anxiety in Moscow, is that of Marshal Tito.

Accordingly, Lenin devised a means of checking any tendency towards supermilitarism. His device took form as the Political Department of the Red Army, otherwise and earlier known as “political commissars” attached to all military units. The idea itself was not new, in fact, it had been tried, with no great success, by the French in the first wars of their infant republic, but Lenin’s scheme was more thorough and efficient, just as his Cheka was a

better watchdog for the Revolution than the French Committee of Public Safety.

The newly formed Red Army, in 1918-19, contained thousands of former Czarist officers, mostly, it is true, in staff posts, but sometimes holding high field command, for the simple reason that the revolutionaries had so few trained men above the rank of sergeant. The first purpose of the political commissar was to keep a sharp and often hostile eye upon the ex-Czarist colonel or general, whose loyalty, as shown by the test of action, was often doubtful.

In lower ranks the commissars and their subordinates, who later were formed into the Political Department of the Army, had other functions. Their prime duty was to indoctrinate the troops about the nature of the class struggle and the fact that they were fighting a people's war against the oppressors and exploiters of the people. But they did more than that, indeed one might almost say that they combined and expanded the duties performed by chaplains, billeting officers, Red Cross, Y.M.C.A., and last, but not least, intelligence officers in the British Army. As "chaplains" they conducted schools of Marxist instruction, brought converts into the Communist fold, and fortified the faith of doubters. They organized clubs and athletics, taught hygiene and cleanliness, and for an army that was largely illiterate had classes in reading and writing. Above all, from the outset they were, as Lenin intended them to be, an instrument of civilian supervision, in the hands of the Kremlin, over the whole army from root to branch.

In the official history of the Communist Party one of the first passages announced as written personally by Stalin contains the following statements about the political commissars. Stalin wrote:

"The work of the Communist Commissars was of decisive importance in the consolidation and political education of the Red Army and in raising its discipline

and fighting efficiency. Lenin said: 'Without the military commissars we would not have had a Red Army.'

"The Red Army was victorious because—

"(a) It produced from its own ranks military commanders of a new type.

"(b) Its political education was in the hands of men like Molotov, Kaganovich, Mikoyan, Zhdanov, Andreyev, Khrushchev, and Shvernik [and Malenkov—W.D.].

"(c) The military commissars cemented the ranks of the Red Army, fostered in them the spirit of discipline and energetically—swiftly and relentlessly—cut short the treacherous activities of certain commanders."

As time passed, however, there came a change in the relation of the Political Department, as it was now termed, to the Red Army, and in 1937 the matter of military versus civilian control grew into a sharp and perilous issue. By then, after seventeen years of peace, the Political Department was little more than an appanage of the General Staff. The commissars still looked after the education and moral welfare of the troops, and still held classes for communist instruction, but they no longer regarded themselves as civilians, and the head of their department, Gamarnik, was a marshal, a soldier every inch of him.

This change had occurred gradually, but some time in 1935-6 its importance and implications were brought to Stalin's attention, I was told, by Voroshilov himself. He is said to have asked for a special meeting of the Politburo to discuss conditions which he described as alarming and in direct contradiction to Lenin's view that the Political Department should be the channel and instrument of civilian control over the army. Without much noise or fanfare steps were taken to divert the Political Department back from the General Staff to the Kremlin. In the lower echelons this was not so difficult, but it met stiff and obstinate resistance at the top. Military commands

invariably and traditionally dislike a division of powers or "interference" by civilians in the workings of an army.

A powerful group of Red Army leaders, headed by the brilliant Marshal Tukhachevsky, resented Stalin's "interference" and after several months of increasingly acrimonious controversy, decided to prevent it by violent and conspiratorial action. During the ten years between the Treaty of Rapallo (1922) and the rise of Hitler, relations between the Russian and German armies had been intimate and friendly. On one occasion in the late twenties the Chief of the German Reichswehr, General von Hammerstein, is said to have conducted Red Army manoeuvres in the region of Kiev. Accordingly, Marshals Tukhachevsky and Gamarnik and the militarist clique in the army appealed to the German General Staff for support in a *coup d'état* or "palace revolution" against Stalin. They hoped to effect the coup through the Kremlin Guard and the students of the Military Academy in the Kremlin, whose commanders belonged to their clique. But they had grave doubts about the mass of the army and the nation as a whole, which prompted them to seek German aid, in return, it was said, for an offer of territory and for economic and political advantages in the Ukraine and North Caucasus.

The Kremlin acted with speed and vigour. Tukhachevsky and seven other generals were arrested early in June, 1937, and put on trial within three days, in sharp contrast to proceedings in other treason trials where the accused were held for preliminary examination during a period of weeks or months. The night before the arrests Marshal Gamarnik committed suicide. Like the other treason trials, this was a court-martial, judged by the Supreme Military Tribunal of the U.S.S.R., but there were two important differences. First, this case was tried *in camera* whereas the others were public. Second, the court of three judges was reinforced by eight high-ranking officers of the Red Army. More than a hundred

prominent soldiers were summoned from various parts of the country to attend the trial. All the accused confessed their guilt and were condemned to death. Their sentences were carried out within forty-eight hours.

I was told by Troyanovsky, former Ambassador to the United States, who had many friends among the spectators, that none of them had any doubts about the guilt of the accused. From other sources I received an explanation of the whole affair which I believe to be reasonably authentic, although I have not been able to confirm it in detail. It appears that the G.P.U. first got wind of treasonable conversations between the German General Staff and Tukhachevsky, who had just visited Prague and Berlin, from information supplied by the Czech Secret Service. In Prague, Tukhachevsky had a meeting with Foreign Minister Beneš, the Czech Commander-in-Chief, General Sirovy, and one other Czech leader, to discuss measures for the defence of the country in case Hitler should attack it. Although no secretaries were present at the meeting and no minutes were kept, the Czech Secret Service in Berlin, where Tukhachevsky stayed for two days after leaving Prague, reported that high German military circles were fully informed about the Tukhachevsky-Beneš-Sirovy conversations. The report gave facts and details which Mr. Beneš recognized as correct, and he was therefore forced to the conclusion that no one but Tukhachevsky could have conveyed this information to the Germans. There was no suggestion that Mr. Beneš was aware of any conflict between Tukhachevsky and the civil authorities in the Kremlin, but he was so angry that Tukhachevsky had given the Germans the substance of the ultra-secret talks in Prague that he promptly passed the report on to Moscow. Tukhachevsky had been scheduled to leave Berlin for London to attend the coronation of King George VI, but was promptly recalled to Moscow and arrested on arrival.

As a result of this trial and the ruthless purge of high

military officers which followed, the Politburo control over the army was completely re-established, though at heavy cost in army efficiency and prestige. For a term of years, the position of the political commissars in Red Army units was restored to something near the level of Civil War days, so that they had the same authority as that of equivalent regimental ranks, and in the event of death or disablement of the commanding officer, he would be succeeded, at least temporarily, by the commissar.

This system continued until the Finnish War in the winter of 1939-40. The "confusion of powers" and "divided command" which it involved was held partly responsible for Russian failures during the early part of the campaign, and in consequence the authority of the Political Department was diminished. In July, 1941, however, when the Red Army was undoubtedly shaken by the weight and speed of the German onslaught, the political commissars were once more given equal authority, and this system was maintained until October of the following year. By that time, it was felt that the Red Army was a match for the Germans, that morale had been restored, and that the inconveniences of divided command now outweighed its advantages. Furthermore, many of the political commissars had gained enough military experience to serve as regular officers, of which there was great need, owing to heavy losses. Accordingly, the system of single command was formally introduced by order of Stalin himself. Many of the political commissars were absorbed into the army as fighting soldiers and the rest carried on their former duties in subordination to their respective commanders.

It is thus possible to estimate the attitude of the Politburo towards the army, as it was outlined in the beginning by Lenin, and restored, modified, and continued—all three words apply—by Stalin, as follows:



1. Lenin was resolved that the Red Army should never be allowed to get out of hand and that the social revolution must not degenerate into a military dictatorship like that of Cromwell or Napoleon.

2. Stalin was equally opposed to the idea of a *military* dictatorship, although the intra-Party controversy led him to accept a *civilian* dictatorship—with himself as dictator. This dictatorship or extreme centralization was consolidated by the necessities of war, and it is still too early to say how far the pledges Stalin has given to relax the dictatorship and democratize the regime have been put into practice. Despite Western opinion to the contrary, I am inclined to believe that this process of relaxation, or democratization, was at least beginning, in all sincerity, in the first year after the war, but it has been checked by the international tension of the last two years.

3. Stalin (i.e., the Politburo) allowed the army to get a considerable, and from the civilian Bolshevik viewpoint dangerous, degree of independence in the years 1924–37, because civilian attention was diverted by the controversy within the Party on the one hand, and the national problems of socializing industry and agriculture on the other.

4. This “independence” of the army was crushed by the execution of Tukhachevsky and the generals, by the military purge, and by the restoration of the Political Department to its original function as a means of civilian control.

5. Under the hammer blows of foreign war, the army was at last forged, in 1942, into a trusted weapon of the Soviet State. The exigencies of combat required a single command, and there was no longer need for civilian control over the military, whose loyalty could no longer be questioned.

Nevertheless, there is more than one sign that the Politburo did not lose, in regard to the army, the quality

on which Bolsheviks pride themselves most highly, namely, vigilance, which might be translated into another less admirable quality, suspicion. To begin with, when Stalin in 1946 resigned the post of Minister of the Armed Forces, he was careful to keep the title of Generalissimo, so as to make it quite clear that he and none other was factual commander-in-chief of all the armies of Russia. It is not by accident, either, that Stalin, who used always to wear rough khaki blouse and breeches, without decorations, has since the war appeared in full uniform, with epaulets of a Soviet marshal.

Secondly, there is the case of Marshal Zhukov, which perhaps is typical of the Politburo attitude towards outstanding military leaders. Zhukov was a true professional soldier, from his beginning as a junior commander of the Red Army in the Civil War to his post as Chief of Staff just prior to Hitler's invasion. He had never served in any political department nor played any politics, and was never tarred by any brush of disloyalty during the army purge. As an army commander, he won his spurs in the successful counter-offensive before Moscow in December, 1941. He played a major role at Stalingrad and in raising the siege of Leningrad. Later, he took Warsaw and commanded the armies which captured Berlin, where he became the Soviet member of the Allied Control Council, with the two most distinguished American and British soldiers, Eisenhower and Montgomery. He received full credit in the Soviet press, in honours and promotion, for his achievements. There is even an official painting of the supreme (civilian) Defence Council, in which Zhukov, the lone non-member, is standing between Stalin and Molotov.

Other Russian army leaders, Konev, Rokossovsky, Vasilevsky, also won well-earned fame, but there must have been a feeling somewhere that Zhukov's star was rising too high and too bright. At any rate, one fine day it was announced that he had been moved from the

Control Council in Berlin to command the garrison of Odessa. Meanwhile, his former subordinate, Konev, is Commander-in-Chief of the Army and another subordinate, Vasilevsky, is Chief of Staff. At the time of Zhukov's appointment to the Odessa command, there was a flurry in Western political and military circles, lest this might indicate a Soviet intention to launch under its greatest general an offensive from the Black Sea region against Turkey. But it was soon obvious that Zhukov, doubtless through no fault of his own, had been side-tracked. Once again, it became apparent—and this applies to Tito—that the Politburo has no love for the “man on horseback.”

To explain further the place of the army in Russia, one may discuss what seems a side issue, to wit, the theatre. The Kremlin has consistently used the theatre, as well as newspapers and speeches, to put its ideas before the public. In 1942, at the height of the battle for Stalingrad, which marked the peak of Russia's agony, there was presented in Moscow a hot and exciting war play called *The Front*. Most surprisingly the full text of the play was published in a single issue of *Pravda*, the official organ of the Communist Party. This meant that the play was being deliberately called to the personal attention of every Communist in Russia. It deals with the conflict between an older general, whose Civil War record had won him high command in World War II, and a younger, more broad-minded and efficient commander, who thinks and acts in terms of modern warfare. The older man is unwilling to learn from his junior and gives unreasonable orders, which cause disasters in one of which his own son is killed. Opposed to him is the junior officer who knows the latest Blitzkrieg technique and is in closer touch with the Red Army of today. Finally, on orders from Moscow, the older man is replaced by the junior.

The fact that it is good melodrama does not explain why *Pravda* gave it the same prominence as it would give

a speech by Stalin or an article by Zhdanov. The reasons may be found in the military situation at the time:

1. The Red Army had rallied from the first shock of German invasion, but was everywhere on the defensive and in retreat. At that moment the Germans had accomplished their deepest penetration, to Stalingrad and in the Caucasus, a thousand miles from their starting-point. In some degree this was due, as the play showed, to the incompetence of the High Command. All armies have to face the same problem, which may be described as "dead wood at the top" or the attempt to "fight this war with the men who won the last one." Thus, General Pershing, in World War I, wielded a most unmerciful axe upon American officers of distinction, many of whom were his personal friends. The Red Army was especially vulnerable in this respect, partly as a result of the military purge. Tukhachevsky and his associates may have been guilty of treason but they were nevertheless the cream of Russia's military skill from a staff-college point of view—Tukhachevsky's books on the strategy and tactics of war have been translated into the major languages and were required reading at every staff college.

As a consequence of the purge, the Kremlin had to fall back upon such Civil War leaders of proved loyalty as Budenny or Voroshilov, who had been good partisan commanders but were hardly equipped for the conduct of big-scale modern war. Voroshilov, it is true, had raised the Red Army to a high level of technical and material preparedness, but that did not mean that as a field commander he was able to vie with German experts in the complicated chess-game of warfare. Budenny, who was generally supposed to have been the object lesson of *The Front*, was a man of great courage and popularity, but as incapable of coping with the German war-chess masters as a fair amateur boxer would be with a professional champion.

A case in point is a remark Stalin made to Wendell Willkie, when Mr. Willkie visited Moscow as the personal representative of President Roosevelt in the summer of 1942—about the same time, incidentally, as *The Front* was produced. Conversation came to the burning topic of when and how there would be an Anglo-American attack in Europe to relieve the hard-pressed Russians. Mr. Willkie agreed with Stalin that such an attack was desirable, and necessary, but pointed out logistic and other difficulties. Then they began to talk about what kind of man should command the attack, if and when. Stalin said: "It is a question of quality. If you are picking a fighter to challenge Joe Louis, you wouldn't judge him by his weight and biceps or measurement of shoulders and calves, but by his past performance. The way to pick a general is not by his rank, but by his record." This implied that men like Marshals Budenny and Voroshilov outranked other officers in the Red Army, but their record in World War II had been surpassed by younger men, which is the story of *The Front*.

2. Publication of *The Front* in *Pravda* meant that it was read by every political commissar in the Red Army, who felt bound, *because it was published in "Pravda,"* to communicate its intent and purpose to the troops. The lesson of the play was not so much that older generals were wrong, although it said so, as that they were now being superseded by younger and more competent men. The army had learned by experience that some of the Civil War commanders were not quite up to their jobs, and *The Front* told them that the Politburo had realized this and that younger and better men were being brought forward to outplay the experts of the German war-game.

3. *The Front* told the troops that the men on top were now being appointed on a basis of merit and success in this war rather than by seniority and success in the last war.

The whole set-up was utterly different from anything

that could happen in America. When Pershing in World War I fired his "deadwood" generals, he did it by executive order and that was that. But he was in France, commander of an expeditionary force, and his homeland wasn't threatened, whereas Russia was at the ultimate peak of its agony. The Politburo took and used the play, *The Front*, to tell the Russian people and the Red Army that it knew the reasons for past failures and was taking measures to correct them. If one can imagine the *New York Times* or the *Herald Tribune* giving over one-quarter of their entire space, as *Pravda* did, to driving this lesson home, one may appreciate what propaganda means as handled by the Politburo in its own country.

Of all means of mass appeal, the theatre works better than press or radio upon the Russian heart. At any rate, within three months after the publication of *The Front* in *Pravda* the Politburo reverted to the classic principle of military command, that there must be no confusion of powers and no divided authority. For this *The Front* was a preparation. It told and was meant to tell the Russian people and the Red Army that the Politburo now had confidence in the High Command and was aware that earlier errors or losses would be redeemed by the appointment of younger and more competent men unhampered by civilian interference or control.

Nevertheless, Zhukov, who typified these younger men and proved by the test of victory his own competence, was given, after the war had been won, a subordinate job in Odessa, which he still holds. He has received the highest decorations and expressions of esteem that a grateful country can bestow upon a general, but he will never ride a white horse into Moscow.

*Chapter Twenty-two*

THE POLITBURO AND  
FOREIGN AFFAIRS

THIS is a book about the Politburo. It is not my intent, nor would it serve any useful purpose, to determine the rights or wrongs of the present controversy between Russia and the Western Democracies, which has reached such a pitch of tension as to be currently described as a "cold war." At risk of undue simplification, I propose to outline Russian post-war policy, with its reasons and aspirations, and to show how its development—whether through its virtues or vices or by sheer accident—led to the present crisis.

At the end of the war, Russian policy might have been summed up in two words: "Never again!" By their own strength and courage but not, as they freely admitted, without the help of their Western allies, the Russians had been victors in the most disastrous conflict that any winning side ever knew. Modern history offers no comparison to the facts and figures of the Russian losses. Accordingly, the Russian peace programme, if it may be called that at a time when the joint winners of the war had barely tackled the problem of a lasting settlement for Europe, was based on the points, with which it then found its Western allies in full accord, as laid down in the Yalta Agreement of February, 1945, between President Roosevelt, Premier Churchill, and Generalissimo Stalin. The agreement stated:

"It is our inflexible purpose to destroy German

militarism and Nazism and to ensure that Germany will never again be able to disturb the peace of the world.

"We are determined to disarm and disband all German armed forces, and to break up for all time the German General Staff that has repeatedly contrived the resurgence of German militarism;

"to remove or destroy all German military equipment;

"to eliminate or control all German industry that could be used for military production;

"to bring all war criminals to just and swift punishment and exact reparation in kind for the destruction wrought by the Germans;

"to wipe out the Nazi party, Nazi laws, organizations and institutions;

"to remove all Nazi and militarist influences from public office and from the cultural and economic life of the German people;

"to take in concert such other measures in Germany as may be necessary to the future peace and safety of the world.

"It is not our purpose to destroy the people of Germany, but only when Nazism and militarism have been extirpated will there be hope for a decent life for Germans, and a place for them in the comity of nations. We have considered the question of the damage caused by Germany to the Allied Nations in this war and recognized it as just that Germany be obliged to make compensation for this damage to the greatest extent possible.

"The establishment of order in Europe and the rebuilding of national economic life must be achieved by processes which will enable the liberated peoples to destroy the last vestiges of Nazism and Fascism and to create democratic institutions of their own choice."

The Yalta Agreement was later confirmed by the Big Three Conference at Potsdam, after the conclusion of



hostilities, where Truman and Attlee replaced Roosevelt and Churchill. The Russians took this programme literally, and at once began to carry it out in their zone, which comprised most of eastern and south-eastern Europe. To them it was a matter of paramount national interest that all vestiges of Nazism should be extirpated root and branch, because when that was done and only then could they be sure that no revival of German power would ever threaten them again.

Although the methods by which Russia undertook to carry out the programme conformed to the principles of the Yalta-Potsdam agreements, they also fell into line, most conveniently, with Russian principles of socialization, because, as it happened, nine-tenths of big business and finance and the landlords in all the countries formerly under German influence had either been taken over by the Nazis or had willy-nilly collaborated with them. The Russians lumped all this together and declared the former owners expropriated, for the benefit of the respective peoples concerned. Big business, finance, and industry were nationalized and turned over to the State, but the land was distributed, in small holdings, to the former tenants of the big landlords. Throughout eastern and south-eastern Europe, where land-hunger had been an age-old grievance, this measure was the most popular of all, and won support for new Communist or semi-Communist regimes, even when the Communist parties were actually in a minority. Nothing, in short, could have suited the Russians better. Under their ægis new "popular" governments were formed with the big asset of nationalized property taken from the Nazis or the collaborators, and the small but more important asset of land distribution to the peasant majorities which had craved it for hundreds of years.

That the Russians did all this in an arbitrary manner is undisputed, and that they sowed the seeds of future trouble in lumping former foreign property, taken over

by the Nazis in such countries as Rumania and Austria, into the category of "Nazi-owned" holdings, is equally true, but the fact is that they were quick to realize and take advantage of the discredit and downfall of capitalism—or call it the system of private enterprise—in most of Europe.

The United States has profited immensely from the system of private enterprise. At no time in world history have so many people in any country reached so high a level of comfort and living standards and all that is meant by civilization as in the United States, a fact which Americans ascribe to the opportunities their country gives for individual initiative. But Americans today fail to realize that in most of Europe the capitalist system is bankrupt and hated for the very reason that it failed to give to Europeans the security and prosperity it has given to Americans.

Even in western Europe, in France and England, people are beginning to feel—and have expressed the feeling by their votes—that the day of private enterprise is over, that the sources of production and means of production should belong to the State for the benefit of the community rather than for that of individuals or groups of individuals. In eastern and central Europe this feeling was tenfold greater. The peoples there felt that their rulers and masters had not only refused them the ownership of the land on which they worked but held them in political thrall, and also had led them to ruin and disaster by collaboration with the Nazis. For these reasons the field was ripe for revolutionary movements, and the widespread hunger and misery caused by the war in urban centres provided or gave an added impetus to what the Western powers soon began to denounce as a Communist flood that was threatening to engulf all Europe.

There is no doubt that the Russians took advantage of prevailing popular sentiment and interpreted the Yalta-

Potsdam agreements to mean that they had a free hand in socializing all the area within their sphere of influence. In the beginning, perhaps, they did this sincerely enough in accordance with the principle of extirpating Nazism and its former supporters, but they soon saw that they might go further, almost indefinitely, along the same lines, that not only eastern and central Europe was willing to agree with them but perhaps western Europe—France and Italy—as well. They had the further advantage that the Communist Parties were not only well disciplined and obedient to them but had won prestige in the war by leading the various “resistance” movements.

It may well be possible that the Politburo, cautious as it is, began to “see visions and dream dreams.” Why not, they may have thought, take fortune by the forelock and sweep on towards the European Socialist Federation in which they believed as an ultimate goal but had scarcely expected in their own day? To put it bluntly, they saw something and went after it.

In the winter of 1946–7 Americans woke up to what was happening. They saw that unless they took action their own system of capitalism and private enterprise, in which they believed as fully as the Russians did in socialism, was not only doomed in central and eastern Europe, that is in the Russian zone of influence, but in western Europe as well, even in Britain where a Labour government was pledged to socialize the sources and means of production, and had already nationalized the banks and transportation and the coal mines and public utilities and was proceeding to an attack upon iron and steel. True, the British did not proceed by outright methods of confiscation. They floated bond issues to indemnify the former private owners and for the most part allowed them to remain in management under government control. It was socialism with kid gloves, but a movement towards socialism none the less. France and Italy were in an even worse plight from the American

viewpoint. They were sliding towards outright communism with confiscation of wealth rather than the more moderate course of British socialization.

The Americans reacted with vigour and used their most powerful weapons, money and supplies of food and goods, to assert their position in an impoverished world. The Truman Doctrine-Marshall Plan was set up in the spring of 1947 as a barrier to the rising tide of communism. It came late but not too late, since it worked and seems to be working, but it had the unfortunate effect of dividing Europe into two unfriendly camps. Because by that time, the Russians, as I said earlier, had proceeded beyond their initial idea of eliminating Nazism and safeguarding themselves against a German revival, to the hope of establishing by any means, hook, crook, cajolery, propaganda, or pressure, Communist or semi-Communist regimes in most of Europe, with themselves as patrons and head centre. On that account any American attempt to check or turn the tide seemed to the Russians like an unfriendly act or at least an infringement upon the freedom of action they had long enjoyed.

The fact of the matter was that Europe after the defeat of Germany became a kind of chaos or void or vacuum. Almost all of it, from an economic, political, and military standpoint, had been tied to Hitler's chariot wheels, and when Hitler's Germany collapsed there was nothing to take its place. England was exhausted and bankrupt, France and Italy in worse case still, and President Truman's administration, to say the least, was unprepared to assume responsibility for a shattered and rudderless continent.

The Yalta-Potsdam agreements had provided for zones of influence between Russia and the West and issued a lot of high-sounding principles on which future peace must be based, but had barely regarded the problem of how that peace should be made, and with whom. To this day there is no German Government with which peace

can be signed. The Western powers went about the business of denazification and destroying German war capacity busily enough. The top Nazis were brought to trial at Nuremberg and executed, German war factories were dismantled, and a large part of German heavy industry was halted or "frozen"—which, incidentally, threw upon the Western Allies the burden of keeping alive millions of Germans thus thrown out of employment.

Meanwhile the Western powers could not fail to see that the Russians were making hay while the rain poured. All the miseries of the German people, all the shortages of essential goods for the rest of Europe which Germany formerly provided were grist to the Russian propaganda mill. Something had to be done quickly. Whether or not it would divide Europe and perhaps the whole world into opposing camps, the Russians must be challenged unless the capitalist system in Europe at least was going to surrender ignominiously.

As everyone knows, the American "challenge" took the form of the Marshall Plan, first proposed in June, 1947, for American financial aid in the reconstruction of Europe. Its benefits were offered originally to all Europe including Russia and its so-called "satellites," of which one, Czechoslovakia, wished to accept. The Russians and other satellites refused, and Czechoslovakia promptly fell into line with them. Now at last the issue was clearly marked, and thenceforward international conferences between Russians and the West led to little more than an exchange of charges and counter-charges.

As time passed, relations grew steadily worse and mutual resentment was heightened by newspaper attacks, radio commentaries, and public speeches on both sides. By the summer of 1948 the phrase "cold war" was universally used to describe a conflict that had grown so acute that fears of a "shooting war" became widespread and were no longer confined to alarmist writers or commentators. Europe was clearly divided into two unfriendly

blocs, the Russians and their satellites, and what virtually became a league of Western powers under American auspices. By midsummer the European powers were asking, and expected to receive, military as well as financial aid from the United States.

Not surprisingly, the focal point of conflict became Germany, jointly occupied by the Russians in the east and the Americans, British, and French in the west. Inside Germany there were two more acute focal points: Berlin and the Ruhr. In pursuance of their aim to create a Western bloc and in view of the failure to reach any settlement with the Russians for the future status of Germany, the Western powers decided to merge their three zones of occupation and, in order to further economic relations between Germany and western Europe, introduced a new currency. The Russians declared that this was an attempt to partition Germany in violation of the Potsdam Agreement. They refused to allow the new currency in Berlin, and instituted a blockade of the western zones of the city, which the Western powers interpreted as an attempt to force them out of Berlin completely.

In the Ruhr the situation was different, since the area was entirely under Western control. The Ruhr's importance lay in the fact that it was the largest coal-and-steel-producing area on the European continent and had been the industrial basis of the German military machine for the past hundred years. Its annual capacity production of steel, 22,000,000 tons, had not been seriously impaired by Allied bombing. The original Four-Power plan had been to reduce German steel production to 8,000,000 tons capacity, and 5,000,000 tons actual output per annum. Later, it was proposed that the annual production should be increased to 12,000,000 tons, in order to enable Germany to export and thus become self-supporting. The Russians agreed, but only on condition that the plants capable of producing the remaining 10,000,000 tons should be dismantled and distributed

as reparations among all the nations engaged in war against Germany, of which Russia would receive 25 per cent. To this the Western powers dissented, and in some quarters Russian intransigence in Berlin was regarded simply as a bargaining point to bring about a general German settlement (and reopen the Ruhr situation), perhaps to their advantage.

At the moment of writing, the Russians and the Western powers appear to be completely at cross purposes, to such a degree that each side is accusing the other of almost exactly the same things. Both sides appear to believe, or profess to believe, that the other is trying to dominate the world. Americans say that Stalin has already built an empire greater than any Czar, in Europe and in Asia, by direct expansion and by the still more dangerous infiltration of Communist ideas. They add that the Russians aim not only at the mastery of Europe and Asia, but ultimately of the Western Hemisphere. The Russians counter-charge that America as the citadel of capitalism is using its money and industrial superiority to maintain the "bad old system of human exploitation," and in the final instance, to replace "democracy" by reaction.

Whether these charges are true or false on either side, the ultimate conclusion will be war, unless something can be done about it. That is the frightful fact, which no observer of current affairs can honestly deny. Even now, short of war, America is allotting astronomical sums of money to expenditure for defence, and has seen fit in peace-time to re-establish the draft. Russia, whose most vital need is the reconstruction of its devastated areas, and whose next most vital need is the improvement of its living standards, is spending a sixth of its income for purposes also labelled defensive.

It is not easy to give the reasons for Russian-American misunderstanding without being influenced by the propaganda in which both sides appear to have indulged.

Perhaps the easiest way would be to list the major grievances or causes for complaint on both sides.

*Russian Causes for Complaint—*

1. The Russians evidently had hoped that the peace settlement would be shaped and maintained by the Big Three, the U.S.A., U.S.S.R., and Britain, in proportion to the degree to which they had borne the brunt of the war. In a speech before the end of hostilities, in November, 1944, Stalin said:

"We do not want a repetition of the ill-starred League of Nations, which had neither the right nor the means to avert aggression. We need a new, fully authorized world organization having at its command everything necessary to uphold peace.

"Can we expect the actions of this organization to be sufficiently effective? They will be effective if the great powers which have borne the brunt of the war against Germany continue to act in a spirit of unanimity and accord. They will not be effective if this essential condition is violated."

Molotov spoke along the same lines in his first address at the San Francisco Conference which was summoned in the spring of 1945 to form the new United Nations. As that conference developed, and in later conferences of the Allied foreign ministers, the Russians found to their distaste that the Big Three had become the Big Five, with the addition of France and China on an equal basis, and that the protests of small powers for a voice in the United Nations won favourable hearing at San Francisco and later at Lake Success.

2. The Bolsheviks have never fully lost their old memories of capitalist intervention against the infant Soviet Republic in 1918-20, and their fear that sooner or later the capitalist nations might again attempt to crush the socialist state.

3. These fears were revived and magnified by



Churchill's speech at Fulton, Missouri, in March, 1946, which the Russians regarded as tantamount to an appeal to the United States and capitalist forces everywhere to form the very kind of intervention bloc against the U.S.S.R. which had existed before. In reply to questions from *Pravda* on March 13, 1946, Stalin stated: "There is no doubt that Mr. Churchill's speech is a call to war with the Soviet Union. . . . He does not like the development of events in Europe and has raised an alarm, appealing to force. He also did not like the appearance of the Soviet regime in Russia after the First World War. Then, too, he raised the alarm and organized the armed expedition of fourteen states against Russia with the aim of turning back the wheel of history."

Stalin was aware, and mentioned, that Churchill was no longer head of the British Government, but he pointed out that Churchill had powerful friends in England and in America—he was actually introduced at Fulton by President Truman. It is probable, however, that it was Churchill's earlier hostility and the memory of the earlier intervention that were uppermost in Stalin's mind.

4. The Russians complained that the agreements made at Potsdam about the German settlement and especially about reparations were not being fulfilled by the Western Allies. They based their demands for a large share of reparations on the fact that their losses from German invasion were equal to those of the rest of the Allies put together.

#### *American Causes for Complaint—*

1. That the Russians had used the presence of their troops in eastern and central Europe to install *minority* Communist (or pro-Communist) regimes friendly to them, by a process of infiltration, intimidation, and pressure.

2. That such conduct was equivalent to Russian expansion and an attempt to dominate Europe, whether by "Red imperialism" or Communism or both.

3. That Russian demands upon Turkey and for trusteeship of an Italian colony in North Africa and the support given to the Communist Parties of France and Italy were all proofs of this desire for territorial expansion and greater influence.

4. That Russia had consistently broken past agreements and cannot be trusted to carry out new ones.

5. An additional Western grievance was the creation in September, 1947, of the nine-power Cominform (Communist Information) bloc, which was regarded not only as Russia's counterblast to the Marshall Plan but as a revival of the original Comintern (Communist International).

In spite of the grievances of both sides, there are certain underlying factors which may justify the hope that the East-West conflict is still more of a diplomatic struggle and less of a war, "cold" or otherwise, than alarmists and propagandists assert. First is the fact that the Communist tide, which reached its peak in the years 1946-7, has definitely receded. National elections in Italy, municipal elections in France, and, more recently, national elections in Finland and Holland, showed a marked diminution of Communist strength although Czechoslovakia fell completely under Communist control in February, 1948. Champions of the Marshall Plan ascribe this, with pride and some justice, to the tonic effect of the help America had promised, upon the people of Europe.

It is likely, also, that Europe is now passing through a phase similar to that which followed World War I. Immediately after both wars, widespread misery, disease, and devastation led to a series of revolutionary movements, but gradually men went back to work in factories and fields, bridges and roads were repaired, epidemics were overcome, and hope succeeded despair. One must remember that by 1924 the Bolsheviks themselves, who

had expected European revolution only a few years before, had begun to speak instead of a temporary revival of capitalism. The same process is now occurring, with of course the important difference that the Red tide has flowed much farther westward.

Secondly, there is a point which seems to have been ignored, or deliberately distorted, by the noisiest of Russia's adversaries in the West: that it is directly in conflict with Russia's most basic interests—peace and reconstruction—to pursue any policy that might lead to war, or even any policy that might lead to the danger of war. This fact has been distorted by repeatedly harping on the size of Russia's army and its military budget, and by taking out of context any phrase in any Soviet speech which mentions the need for strength, vigilance, and military security. Correspondingly, there is a tendency to neglect or to decline to notice the steady decrease in Russia's military budget and the successive reductions by demobilization of the Red armed forces. For example, on the same day that the *New York Times* double-headed President Truman's speech in California demanding huge new military appropriations for the United States, there was also printed a five-line squib stating that the Russians had released from service all enlisted men above the age of twenty-two. Since the previous age had been twenty-six, the Soviet move meant a reduction in numbers of nearly 50 per cent.

Whatever may be thought about Stalin and his associates, the past twenty years have demonstrated that neither he nor they are reckless adventurers. A man who waited patiently for years to outwit and encompass his personal opponents, who was willing, for tactical reasons, to make a deal with the worst enemy of his country, is unlikely to venture the test of war with the mightiest power on earth at a time when the lifeblood of his own country has so lately ceased to flow from a thousand wounds.

Thirdly, there is a factor in Russian foreign policy

which has been somewhat overlooked in the hurly-burly of recent controversy, or again, on occasion, distorted. That is the great number of treaties and trade agreements that have been signed by the U.S.S.R. since the end of the war. Before the war ended the U.S.S.R. signed six twenty-year treaties of friendship, mutual assistance, and economic co-operation; with Britain in May, 1942; Czechoslovakia in December, 1943; France in February, 1945; Yugoslavia, in April, 1945; Poland, in the same month; and China in August, 1945. All these treaties are still in force and have not been protested by either party. Since the war over fifty pacts have been made between Russia and other countries, mostly, it is true, with satellite countries, but the list includes trade and communications pacts with Argentina, Britain, France, Belgium-Luxembourg, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Switzerland, Uruguay, Afghanistan, Egypt, and Holland. In addition, the Russians have negotiated a whole series of pacts for trade and mutual assistance between their satellite countries, even those like Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Yugoslavia which have long been economic rivals and politically on unfriendly terms.

It is remarkable also that trade agreements with non-satellite countries in Europe since the cleavage between East and West developed all involve large exports of Russian foodstuffs (grain) for human and animal consumption. Shortages or high prices of food have been one of the prime reasons for strikes, labour trouble, popular discontent, and all such incentives to revolution in post-war Europe. Yet the Russians, for business purposes, are doing the very thing to mitigate this danger in the West. Does this mean that Mikoyan as Soviet Trade Minister has fought with Molotov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, who may wish to starve western Europe into political submission, or with Zhdanov, who may have wished to starve western Europe into revolution, and prevailed over both of them, or should one trust Stalin's

pre-war formulation of Soviet foreign policy: "We stand for peace and the strengthening of business relations with all countries"?

Absurd as the idea of such a conflict between Molotov and Mikoyan may sound, a similar argument was voiced in the West in regard to the intra-Party struggle between Tito of Yugoslavia and the Cominform. This, too, was presented to American and British readers or radio-listeners as a fight between Zhdanov, the hot-head Communist zealot, and Molotov, the prudent statesman.

### *Chapter Twenty-three*

## THE POLITBURO AND WORLD COMMUNISM

**S**TALIN's claim to have been "Lenin's faithful disciple and the prolonger of his work" would seem automatically to ensure his devotion to the Comintern (Communist International), which Lenin founded in March, 1919. Lenin's action, like the creation of the Cominform in 1947, was hailed by the enemies of Bolshevism abroad as proof that this new and sinister doctrine aimed at nothing less than world domination or, in the meantime, at setting up fifth columns of espionage and treason in capitalist countries.

To Lenin, no doubt, the matter was less simple. At that time he may still have believed in the imminence of European revolution and wished to co-ordinate the Communist movements of various nations in view of that possibility. He certainly did believe, as all real Bolsheviks believe to this day, in the ultimate overthrow of capitalism, and for that reason, obviously, international co-ordination was desirable. Then, too, in these first years of the Revolution, there was an element of almost religious fanaticism in the Bolshevik mentality, by which the Comintern represented a missionary or proselytizing force amid the capitalist heathen.

In addition, Russia was then on the defensive, and foreign Communist parties represented, not a fifth column or espionage organ, but a nucleus of friendship to Soviet Russia around which could be raised a storm of

protest against Western attempts to "put the clock back" by supporting the White reactionaries—as indeed occurred in England, when the "Hands Off Russia" slogan voiced by a small group of Communists induced the powerful Dock Workers' Union to refuse to load ships with arms and supplies for the forces of Kolchak and Denikin.

As a member of Lenin's first Politburo, Stalin stood for the Comintern and was for some time a member of its Executive Committee. Early in 1922 he devoted himself to the more arduous duties of General Secretary of the Communist Party and of Commissar of Nationalities. At that time and for some years later the head of the Comintern, Chairman of its Executive Committee, was Zinoviev, a brilliant and convincing orator but a "Western Exile," who had lived long in Europe, remote from Russia, a non-Russian (he was Jewish), a man of clever thought who shrank from action—in short, an ideal president for an international movement, the guns of which were sighted on the distant future.

Then Lenin died, and there rose the struggle for power which culminated in the duel between Stalin and Trotsky. Trotsky chose the line of attack that Stalin was betraying the principles of Marx and Lenin by trying to build socialism in one country and ignoring world revolution in favour of Russian nationalism. Stalin *was* trying to build socialism in one country, and proved it, to Trotsky's ruin, but he never would admit that he "ignored" world revolution. He did, however, hold fast to a good American principle which has been his guide through life, that first things come first. First, said Stalin, establish socialism solidly in Russia, and then we can see about the world. This, of course, implied a lessening of the importance of the Comintern in Stalin's mind, and when Zinoviev joined the opposition in a way and at a time which seriously shook the Stalinist forces, Stalin may well have cursed the Comintern and all its works, because

involuntarily he identified it with Zinoviev and the rest of the "Western Exiles," his inveterate enemies.

So paradoxical, however, is human nature, that once Trotsky and Zinoviev and the "Western Exiles" had been liquidated, Stalin realized that a purified Comintern might be—what Lenin had intended, at least in part—an instrument of Soviet foreign policy. As the menace of Germany grew in the early thirties, Stalin used the Comintern to make alliances with Western socialist and labour parties to form a united front against the Nazi-fascists. This theory was first advocated by Dimitrov, the Bulgarian hero of the Reichstag Fire trial, in the beginning of 1934. Triumphantlly acquitted, Dimitrov flew to Moscow, where Stalin put him in charge of the purified Comintern to conduct the "United Front" policy. The fact that the policy was no more successful in stopping the Nazis than its diplomatic counterpart, the policy of collective security conducted by Litvinov, did not cause any rupture or ill-feeling between Stalin and Dimitrov, who is now Premier of Bulgaria.

The other members of the Politburo, who are Stalin's men, loyal to him and trained in his ideas, are also, like Stalin, Leninists, and as such supported the Comintern. But there is no evidence to show that any of them challenged Stalin's decision to dissolve the Comintern in the middle of the war, when it appeared to have no more than a nuisance value as far as Russia's Western allies were concerned.

Whether the dissolution of the Comintern was genuinely meant by Stalin or was just a lip-service subterfuge to gratify Messrs. Roosevelt and Churchill and their respective countries is open to question. Stalin's own speeches at that time and up to the end of the war seemed strongly to indicate the former. Without disavowing his fundamental Marxist belief in the ultimate victory of socialism, Stalin repeatedly declared that the two rival economic systems could live together in har-



mony, with good will on both sides, and pledged his support to an international organization (the United Nations).

The Russians do not seem to have missed the Comintern from the time of its dissolution in 1943 until the middle of 1947. During that period, the war had been won, and Russian plans for the "democratization" of eastern Europe had been successful. So great was this success by the spring of 1947 that it provoked in the United States an alarm and opposition which found expression in the Truman Doctrine-Marshall Plan. The Russians retaliated by declaring that the Marshall Plan, in turn, was American expansionism, and promptly took steps to counter it by forming a new Communist international organization, whose purpose was expressed by Zhdanov in a speech at the foundation meeting near Warsaw in September, 1947, when he said: "Communists are called upon to play a special historical role; to head the resistance to the American plan for the enslavement of Europe." [!]

The meeting included representatives of only nine Communist Parties—those of the U.S.S.R., Italy, France, and six eastern European countries (excluding Finland, Albania, and Greece)—which decided to form a new body called the Communist Information Bureau (Cominform). The change of title (from Comintern) may have been an attempt to parry old foreign charges that the Comintern interfered in the affairs of other countries and maintained fifth columns. In fact, Zhdanov seems to have wished to forestall similar accusations about the new body because his speech contained the statements: "Representatives of all kinds of activities—scientists, co-operators, trade unionists, youth, students—consider it possible to maintain international contacts and arrange international conferences, but Communists, even of Allied countries, hesitate to establish friendly contacts among themselves." He went on to say it was time to put an end to this state of isolation among the Communist Parties.

Zhdanov threw back at the Americans their own accusations, almost word for word. He said:

"The U.S.A. has proclaimed a new, openly predatory expansionist orientation, which has as its aim the establishment of the world domination of U.S. imperialism. . . .

"In order to consolidate the U.S. monopoly of markets which arose from the elimination of its two largest competitors—Germany and Japan—the new U.S. policy involves a broad programme of military, economic, and political character . . . to reduce all countries that are the object of U.S. expansion to the position of satellites of the U.S.A.

"But athwart the path of the U.S. striving for world domination stands the U.S.S.R.—this bulwark of anti-imperialist and anti-fascist policy. That is why the new expansionist and reactionary course of U.S. policy is designed for struggle against the U.S.S.R., against the countries of new democracy, against the working-class movement in every country.

"The feverish arms race and construction of new military bases for American armed forces in every part of the world are hypocritically justified by the plea of defence against the imaginary military threat of the U.S.S.R.

"By means of threats, bribery, and blackmail, American diplomacy is snatching from other capitalist countries, and in the first place from Britain, consent to the legalization of advantageous American positions in Europe and Asia, in the western zones of Germany and Austria, in Italy, Greece, Turkey, Egypt, Iran, China, and Japan.

"It is necessary to bear in mind that the U.S. is threatened with an economic crisis. Marshall's generosity has its solid reasons; if the European countries do not receive American credits, the demand of these countries for American goods will shrink and that will hasten and intensify the approaching economic crisis. Therefore, if

the European countries are sufficiently steadfast and prepared to resist the enslaving credit conditions, the U.S.A. can be forced to retreat.

"Between the desire of the imperialists to unleash a new war and the possibilities of organizing such a war there is an enormous gap. The peoples of the world do not want war. . . . If the Communist Parties will stand firmly on their positions, if they will not allow themselves to be intimidated and blackmailed, if they will stand on guard for a stable peace and popular democracy, on guard for the national sovereignty, freedom, and independence of their countries, then no plans for the enslavement of Europe can be realized."

The fact that both Zhdanov and Malenkov were chosen as the Russian representatives in the new Communist body, made it abundantly clear that the Politburo was behind it. No one familiar with Soviet methods could suppose for a moment that so frank and uncompromising a speech as Zhdanov's was delivered without the complete foreknowledge and approval of Stalin and his other colleagues. At the time, this was fully understood in the United States, and it was not until later that one began to hear the old cry of dissensions in the Russian ruling group. American critics were quick to describe the new body as a revival of the Comintern, with all the obloquy and distaste which that implied. Most of them hailed it, almost gleefully, as proof of the nefarious designs that they had attributed to the U.S.S.R., which served to whet American popular feeling against Russia and perhaps helped to overcome reluctance in certain sections of Congress to vote the prodigious sums for European aid and for American military expenditure, not to mention the peace-time draft.

As things happened, Zhdanov seems to have underestimated the attractions to western European countries of the Marshall Plan, and overestimated the resolution

of western European Communists, because, as mentioned earlier, all elections that were held in Europe showed distinct, though not too considerable, loss of Communist votes. Part of these losses was due to the more vigorous electoral campaigns of the anti-Communist parties, especially those supported by the Roman Catholic Church, which showed a striking revival of energy and political activity.

But that was of relatively small moment from the Communist angle, in comparison with the sudden row, in the summer of 1948, between the Cominform majority and Marshal Tito's Yugoslav Communist Party, which had refused to send delegates to a meeting of the Cominform in Bucharest. This bombshell was exploded by Cominform headquarters in a communiqué which made gay reading for the non-Communist world, to whom it seemed that the Russians in Yugoslavia had been hoist with their own petard. The preamble to this portentous document stated that it was based on a report by the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party, that is by the Politburo. It accused Tito and his fellow-leaders of the Yugoslav Communist Party of "creating a hateful policy towards the Soviet Union and the Russian Bolshevik Party." It said bluntly that Soviet military and civil personnel in Yugoslavia were discredited, watched, followed, spied upon, and "put under the guard of the organs of State Security." (What is this but an echo of the wails emitted by so many diplomats and other foreigners in Moscow that they could not move without the surveillance of the Soviet Secret Police?) The communiqué continued plaintively that the Yugoslav leaders had "begun to identify the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. with that of the imperialistic powers and treated the U.S.S.R. in the same manner as bourgeois states."

The Yugoslav leaders were accused of (a) favouring the richer peasants (kulaks) at the expense of their poorer brethren, (b) submerging the Communist Party in the

larger non-Communist and semi-bourgeois People's Front, (c) ruling the Yugoslav Party with a rod of iron — "They appointed the members of the Party Central Committee instead of electing them. . . . The slightest criticism of Party members is followed by cruel reprisals. . . . Such a shameful Turkish terroristic regime must not be allowed in the Communist Party. . . . The leaders of the Yugoslav Party are affected by exaggerated ambition, megalomania, and conceit. . . . They have deserted international communism to follow the path of nationalism."

The communiqué stated that Yugoslav leaders were yielding to the intimidations and blandishments of Western capitalism and beginning to accept the theory that the capitalist states were less of a danger to Yugoslav independence than the Soviet Union. It concluded by an appeal to the Communist Party of Yugoslavia either to force its leaders to confess their faults and correct them, or, if they refused to do so, to replace them by new and better comrades.

To the open dismay of the Communist world and the not-too-secret delight of its opponents everywhere, the Yugoslav Party came back with a solid defence of their "heroic leader," which was unexpectedly echoed by the Yugoslav Embassy in Moscow and still more surprisingly by a group of Yugoslav students at the Moscow Communist University. Tito, for his part, riposted by an appeal for a Balkan bloc, earlier proposed by Premier Dimitrov of Bulgaria, which Moscow had vetoed. This was little more than a gesture of defiance, as the other Balkan parties had supported the Cominform declaration against Tito. Albania, a non-member of the Cominform, gave some colour to charges of Tito's high-handedness by repudiating its commercial agreement with Yugoslavia. The Albanians expelled all Yugoslav military and diplomatic personnel and other representatives on the grounds that Yugoslavia had abused its greater numerical

superiority and military strength. The Rumanians cut off from Yugoslavia oil supplies and river communications along the Danube, but these "sanctions" were offset by Washington's decision to return to Yugoslavia some \$57,000,000 in gold deposited in the United States at the outbreak of war and frozen "for the duration" when Yugoslavia was overrun by the Germans.

It is not easy to explain the reasons for this rupture, but one of them must have been the Politburo's traditional abhorrence for the "man on horseback," the military leader, which Tito undoubtedly was. (It is worth noting that Stalin, in his interview with Stassen, said that before the war he had devoted much time to studying economic problems, and only became a military man by force of necessity.) It is probable, too, that Tito's notorious fondness for elaborate uniforms and military pomp were regarded as bad signs by the Politburo, which evidently decided that the time had come to "cut him down to size."

The strength of Yugoslav reaction to the Cominform attack would seem to indicate that the Politburo had miscalculated the power of nationalism as compared with the centralizing force of international Communism. It is known that rebukes on this account have frequently been addressed to other foreign Communists, notably in France. Finally, the Politburo may have forgotten that Yugoslavia, and for that matter other Balkan countries, are much more independent than the Soviet Federated Republics of the Ukraine and Caucasus, where more than once national sentiment had given rise to considerable difficulties with the centre.

The whole affair had a quaintly ecclesiastical flavour, as of some red pope in Moscow hurling threats of excommunication at the head of a contumacious foreign prelate, but there is no doubt that it was a serious challenge to Moscow's authority and prestige. I do not agree, however, with some American writers that it denotes a

split or disagreement in the Politburo itself. Events will show whether or not it was a Russian error of judgment, but in any case I am sure that the line adopted by the Cominform was approved by Stalin and his colleagues as a group.

Zhdanov's body was hardly cold in death before the Central Committee published in *Pravda* an editorial, signed with its initials, expressing its full solidarity with the attitude of the Cominform and Zhdanov towards Marshal Tito. On this occasion the Central Committee spoke for the Politburo, which it includes<sup>1</sup> and—at least nominally—elects, and for the Russian Communist Party, of which it is the official supreme authority. Nothing could indicate more clearly that Zhdanov's death will bring no change in Cominform policy, or in Soviet policy, since the two are connected.

Soviet foreign policy, as seen in recent years, is two-fold. On one hand it aims at increasing Russian influence and authority throughout the world by Communist infiltration and propaganda, by threats and pressure, and by overt or secret support of revolutionary forces everywhere. On the other hand, it is always careful to maintain links with other powers, to avoid an open rupture, and even to make agreements with them—for instance, commercial treaties with England, Sweden, etc.—on mutually satisfactory terms. In this policy, which is more cautious and subtle than is generally realized abroad, Zhdanov and the Cominform took a forward, almost aggressive line, whereas Molotov and Mikoyan (Vice-Premier in charge of commerce) saw to the maintenance of links. Far from conflicting, the two lines of policy dovetailed neatly to form a whole that is appropriate to the Russian character and to the position of Russia today.

<sup>1</sup> All members of the Politburo are also members of the Central Committee.

## *Chapter Twenty-four*

# THE POLITBURO TODAY AND TOMORROW

THE Politburo, whether regarded as a machine of government or as a group of men united for a common purpose, is inevitably the sum total of its individual parts. My investigation of the characters and careers of the members of the Politburo, based not only on Soviet records and on their own speeches and statements, but also on such personal contacts and knowledge as I was able to obtain, seems to establish several points:

(a) that they are not a set of greedy, self-indulgent gangsters like the Nazi leaders of Germany;

(b) that all of them worked for self-improvement by education and experience, and won promotion by merit;

(c) that, with the possible exception of Andrejev, they were all Stalin's men always, devoted to him and his objectives in a bloc so solid as to enable him to defeat less united opponents (even Andrejev's temporary defection—in the case of the "Workers' Opposition" controversy—did not involve allegiance to Trotsky, Stalin's principal adversary);

(d) that, despite instances of personal independence, notably shown by Zhdanov, they are one of the tightest-knit and most united ruling groups the world has known;

(e) that, speaking by and large, they owe their success, as Stalin has owed *his* success, to the Party Secretariat, to which most of them belonged at one time or another. The Secretariat has in essence and in substance controlled



the machinery of the Communist Party, which obviously spells success in a country where no other party is permitted to exist.

Critics may deduce from this that all from Stalin downward have shown a gift for intrigue, opportunism, and bamboozlement of the public, which have been the stock-in-trade of politicians since time immemorial. One can take a harsh view of politics and say that its purpose is simply to remain in power by giving the public what it wants or kidding the public into thinking that it gets what it wants, but it is hard to throw such reproach at Stalin and his associates who have given the Russian people during twenty years of effort and suffering something much more like Winston Churchill's "blood, sweat, and tears."

To attack the Politburo as a group of heartless men who have clamped an iron tyranny upon two hundred million slaves is a line that has found wide favour in America, but this too seems hardly to conform with the facts. "Slaves" cannot be driven to such heights of courage and endurance as the Russian people showed throughout four years of war, especially in the terrific sieges of Sevastopol, Stalingrad, and Leningrad. The Russian people do not have the freedom for which Americans and British alike and their ancestors have fought, has no knowledge or tradition of that kind of freedom, and has now no contact with such freedom where it exists in the world. The facts of history and the Russian background have developed the herd instinct in the Russian masses just as the facts of history and the American background have developed personal independence in American individuals. The leaders of Russia today believe in and operate on a concept of unanimous action to which opposition is treason. Far from trying to build a tradition of individual freedom—freedom of speech or freedom of action—or to foster contact with

it as an idea, they are forced by their own philosophy to disapprove it and suppress it.

Stalin and his Politburo take the apparently realistic view that the present basic aspirations of the Russian people are not Liberty (in the American sense) and the Pursuit of Happiness, but Self-improvement (in almost every sense) and the Pursuit of Happiness. Never have I met a people so avid for knowledge, so eager to learn as the Russians. They lived in gutters and pigsties for centuries, and the Bolsheviks have shown them that the way out and up is by education. That gift at least the Bolsheviks have given their country: they have opened the gates of opportunity to the lowest worker and the most backward peasant. That this has been done to some extent by compulsion means less to Russians than it would to Americans. Russia's masses have always been pushed around, with little regard for the personal feelings, of which Americans are such jealous guardians, but now they are being pushed up, out of their gutters and pigsties, whether they like it or not. Many of them didn't like it and kicked against the pricks, with dire results to themselves. But the majority has been acquiescent, perhaps almost, and increasingly, enthusiastic, in support of the Stalinist programme. Stalin's victory over Trotsky and the "Western Exiles," who had preponderant advantages at the beginning of the intra-Party controversy, was due in no small degree to his superior knowledge of the ways and wishes of the Russian masses.

In foreign affairs the Politburo has been less successful, perhaps through the very nature of a highly centralized, single-party system. As has been shown on several occasions, notably with Finland in 1939 and more recently with Yugoslavia, the Politburo has been misled about foreign public opinion by the reports of its own agents. The latter, in turn, suffer from two defects inherent in the system. They wish to send good news that will please their leaders and masters—an old Asiatic

failing since the days when the Persians killed messengers who brought bad news—and they have a natural desire to show that they, as “missionaries” abroad, have won to the Communist cause converts whose number and influence they exaggerate.

If I were asked to summarize the cardinal characteristics of the Politburo today in one phrase, I should answer, “Unity and loyalty to Stalin.” Yet, strangely enough, these two points are frequently questioned by American writers and commentators who gloat over quarrels in the Politburo and Stalin’s failing grip. They seem to forget that Stalin, the master politician, hand-picked each of these men and trained them and welded them into a close interlocking group by the force of his own personality and their mutual interests. Although Lenin drove a divided team, which led to trouble after his death, Stalin has no such problem. In the summer of 1948 Harold Stassen wrote as follows in the *Herald-Tribune* about the Cominform-Yugoslav dispute:

“I believe that it indicates that Zhdanov who is the most ruthless and the least well-informed of the key members of the Politburo, has won out in policy decisions within the Politburo in the Kremlin. Zhdanov and Voznesensky and Beria are the most ignorant about the rest of the world outside the Soviet Union’s borders. They are also the most rigid in hewing to a party line. The denunciations of Tito and the attempt to drive the Allies out of Berlin are two actions of the same type springing from this kind of mentality. Molotov, with a greater knowledge of the rest of the world, and Mikoyan must have been overruled in their more gradual approach towards the same objectives. The weight of the Politburo decision must have been so strong that Stalin himself could not well veto it, and it is unlikely that with his knowledge of the rest of the world he would enthusiastically join in such policies.”

Mr. Stassen's implication seems to be either that Stalin is not the supreme Soviet authority, that his grip is slipping, or, as Mr. Truman expressed it, "Joe is the prisoner of the Politburo."

I have already given my reasons for rejecting the Truman-Stassen doctrine, but in a sense quite different from the American opinion, there may be a grain of truth in the talk about internal conflict and divergence of views in the Politburo. Such conflict as may exist, however, is truly internal, in the heart of each individual member. All of them, from Stalin downward, are in some degree "prisoners" of their own beliefs and hopes, or perhaps of their own delusions. In other words, every sincere Bolshevik has a profound spiritual conviction that the Marxist-Leninist teaching and way of life alone are right and certain to prevail. In dealing with the day-to-day realities of politics at home and abroad, this conviction must often be suppressed or thrust into the background, but it is frequently so strong as to produce an inner conflict. Thus, Molotov fights with Molotov, not with Malenkov, and Mikoyan with Mikoyan. One can easily see, for instance, how the idealist urge to carry the Red gospel to the unenlightened Balkans and to set them right on matters of doctrine might clash with political expediency. The Soviet Revolution is still so near that one can say that every Bolshevik leader has in his heart a "little St. Paul," bound in duty to reprove backsliders and strengthen laggards in the faith. This mental cleavage between the ardently desired and the limits of the possible has always existed in Soviet history, and must still exist to some extent, although the careers of the present Politburo members show that severally and collectively, they have held to the more practical course of the limits of the possible.

There may be, of course, another aspect of reports that Stalin's grip is slipping. In the last year or two there have been many rumours of his failing health, one of

which held that a famous foreign cancer specialist had flown to Moscow to examine the Soviet Premier. This was later contradicted by the specialist in question, but it shows to what lengths imagination—and wishful thinking—can go. Actually, Stalin is said to suffer from a dilated heart, which is not a progressive malady but may account for the fact that he never travels by plane. Certainly, he is no longer young and has led a life of early hardship, and in recent years of unremitting toil under great strain, but there is no valid sign of any weakening in his authority—an authority which has been the guiding principle of the Politburo ever since the supremacy of the Stalinists was established.

Nevertheless, the persistent rumours of Stalin's ill health have led to a great deal of speculation in the Western world as to the possible effects of his death. Such talk almost invariably centres upon the question, "When Stalin dies, who will take his place?" This question has been so often and so widely asked—and answered—that it cannot be ignored, but before discussing the point it is necessary to observe that most of the discussions have been based upon one or more of the following assumptions:

- (a) that age-old Russian tradition requires a single autocrat, or supreme ruler;
- (b) that Stalin will appoint or designate his "successor";
- (c) that a "successor" will be elected by the surviving members of the Politburo;
- (d) that a "successor" will emerge by seniority, or strength, or guile, with or without conflict and opposition.

Plausible as these assumptions may appear to Western thought, they fail to take into account certain factors in the Soviet system and in the nature of the Politburo itself. To begin with, the chief purpose of the Bolshevik Revolution was to destroy and abolish for ever the Czarist system of irresponsible autocracy based on succession by

heredity. Secondly, neither Stalin himself nor any Soviet spokesman, high or low, has ever so much as alluded to the possibility of the inheritance of Stalin's mantle. Such an idea is the product, entirely, of Western surmise. Thirdly, there is the fact that Stalin's present position of supereminence—virtual dictatorship—is the result, largely if not primarily, of the conflict of views and personalities which existed in Lenin's Politburo and of the long and savage intra-Party controversy which followed Lenin's death. Among Stalin's adherents there is no such conflict nor any such controversy in prospect.

This absence of conflict or future controversy need not imply, and does not imply, a flat level of equality of the Politburo members under Stalin. Molotov's seniority and services are as fully recognized as the intimate relationship of Malenkov to Stalin and to the Secretariat. The mere fact of seniority alone and the less tangible fact of "standing" make gradations of influence as inevitable as the differences of opinion which must always arise in any group of men. But long years of give and take under Stalin's direction, no less than the custom of entrusting to each man a special department to handle, which fits him into his place in the composite mass and thus contributes to final unanimity of decision, cannot fail to combat and counteract the idea that any single one of them should be chosen to take Stalin's place. Deprived of Stalin, it seems likely that the Politburo would adopt the pattern set in Turkey after the death of Kemal Ataturk, when the mantle of the dead leader was, so to speak, divided among his associates rather than assumed by any one of them. Such a solution, which has proved successful in Turkey, would be in harmony with the character, structure, and functions of the Russian Politburo.

There is, however, one other cause which contributed greatly to Stalin's ascendancy that might again come into play to justify Western forecasts. Stalin's "dictatorship" was fostered and facilitated—one might also say confirmed

—by war, first as an imminent threat, then as an overwhelming reality. History may not always repeat itself, but similar causes produce similar effects, and the near probability of war or actual hostilities at the time of Stalin's death might again lead to the concentration of authority in the hands of a single man.

With this exception, which is far from negligible in the present troubled state of world affairs, the problem of a Politburo without Stalin should be considered in the light of the Soviet programme as it has been set forth by Stalin and his colleagues. Such factors as the Constitution of 1936, with its extension of the elective system, the oft-repeated Marxist-Leninist-Stalinist promise of eventual self-government by the people, the present parity between the Politburo and the "Cabinet" of Vice-Premiers, and the apparent post-war tendency to merge the highest ranks of the Communist Party and the Soviet Government—all those factors, unless again affected by war, will act, albeit slowly and gradually, against the perpetuation of dictatorship in general and of an individual dictator in particular.

## POSTSCRIPT

**T**HE recent high-level changes in the Soviet machine have attracted universal attention and have given rise to a variety of interpretations. It may be said at the outset that these changes do not involve any great shift of policy, and that they follow a clearly defined pattern.

The changes are as follows:

Molotov and Mikoyan were removed from their posts as Foreign Minister and Minister of Foreign Trade, and were succeeded by their chief assistants, Vishinsky and Menshikov, respectively.

Voznesensky was removed from the post of Chairman of the State Planning Commission and succeeded by his chief assistant, Saburov.

Bulganin was removed from the post of Minister of Defence and succeeded by Marshal Vasilevsky, the conqueror of Manchuria and former Chief of Staff.

Earlier, Kosygin had been removed from the post of Finance Minister and appointed Minister of Light Industry and Textiles, a position he had held before. As Minister of Finance, he, too, was succeeded by his chief assistant, Zverev, who had formerly been Finance Minister for the long period of ten years.

It is significant that all five of these changes involve members of the all-powerful Politburo of the Communist Party, and it is here that the general pattern can be detected. Put simply, it means that these men have been freed from administrative duties in order to concentrate upon matters of highest national importance, which, after all, is the true function of the Politburo. In the years prior to the war, and during the war, it was necessary, for the sake of immediate and energetic action, for Politburo



members to have as direct control as possible over the respective departments of government—to become specialists, so to speak, each in his own sphere. They are now reverting to a more normal peace-time procedure. In other words, the function of the Politburo had been distorted and that distortion is now being corrected.

The first of the changes, that of Kosygin, who is, at forty-four, the youngest, and only a candidate member of the Politburo, was little noticed abroad. But the removal of Molotov and Mikoyan led to a flood of surmise. The first reaction, that it heralded a split in the “monolithic unity” of the Politburo, was reluctantly dismissed as wishful thinking when it was seen that both men retained their rank as deputy Prime Ministers and were seen in Stalin’s closest company and were greeted with great enthusiasm at the meeting of the Supreme Soviet then in session. This produced the opinion that, instead of being demoted, Molotov was destined for the post of Prime Minister, from which it was suggested Stalin was anxious to retire. In that event, Mikoyan would rank as his chief assistant and almost equal partner.

This may well be the case. It is supported by the fact that Stalin had already retired from his wartime post as Minister of Defence—the official term is “Minister of the Armed Forces”—but it is by no means certain that Stalin would relinquish his position as simultaneous head of the Party and head of the Government, a position which he holds as an almost symbolic link between the two. Although the government is the creation of the Communist Party and therefore, in a sense, inferior to it, the fact that Stalin is Premier enhances the Government’s prestige and puts it, symbolically, on a level with the Party. It is at least noteworthy that, despite foreign speculation, thus far there has been no sign in Russia that Stalin is inclined to give up the Premiership.

The subsequent changes of Voznesensky and Bulganin, particularly the latter, brought a new development in

foreign opinion, which ran along two lines, both clearly tinged by hopeful thought. It was suggested that the changes were due to profound divergencies and rivalries within the Politburo, and/or this was really due to the illness of Stalin. In short, that the "fight for succession" had already begun. This comforting notion, which found its latest expression in Churchill's pregnant allusion to the death of a Great Khan which once saved Europe from the Mongol hordes, ranged from the inspired (by whom?) statement of Walter Winchell that Stalin was dying of cancer to the more cautious assertion of the brothers Alsop that he had had four strokes in the past year.

Considered dispassionately, such gossip is on a par with the old canards about Lenin arresting Trotsky and vice versa in the early days of the Revolution, although it cannot be denied that Stalin is no longer young, that he has led a hard life, and that both he and his senior colleagues are looking to the future, both in the sense of relieving themselves of their own administrative burdens and of preparing younger men to take their place. It is worth remembering that four of the five Politburo members who have died in office in the past dozen years were below the age of fifty-five. In reality, each of the changes, with the possible exception of Kosygin, involves no more than the retirement—upstairs—of an executive in favour of his nearest subordinate—just as if it were decided that the chief executives of four great American banks, who already were members of a superior policy-making Bankers' Board, should henceforth devote all their energies to policy-making and leave the burden of administrative work to their own subordinates.

In attempting to explain any action, either of individuals or of governments, it is almost always necessary to reckon with several factors. One factor, which I have hitherto omitted, is the growing hostility between the U.S.S.R. (and its satellites) and the Western world, as exemplified most lately by the Atlantic Pact. The

Russians cannot ignore this, as is evident when one comes to examine their recent changes, case by case. They must feel that neither Molotov as Foreign Minister nor Mikoyan as Minister of Trade can do much more, in the present circumstances, than butt their heads against the stone wall of Western opposition. From a purely personal standpoint, these men see little to gain and much to lose. I do not think that this is a decisive factor, but it has a certain importance. Similarly, in the case of the Bulganin-Vasilevsky switch: here, too, the formal lining up of sides—West versus East—may seem to the Russians to require a technical specialist like Vasilevsky at the head of their military establishment. This view is further supported by the fact that the military budget of the U.S.S.R. has been slightly increased for the first time since the war. On the other hand this is the first time since the war that the Minister of the Armed Forces has not been a Politburo member, which might indicate that the danger of war does not bulk so large in Russian eyes as may be imagined.

Next, the case of Voznesensky, who not only was removed from his position as head of the State Planning Commission, but also ceased to be a deputy Prime Minister. Since all his colleagues in the Politburo have retained their titles as deputy Prime Ministers and he has not, it is possible, though by no means sure, that Voznesensky may have been found wanting, or rather, to put it more accurately, may have failed to meet adequately the permanent dilemma of choice between the development of heavy industry and consumers' goods.

It is perhaps significant to this factor in Voznesensky's case that Kosygin, prior to the war, did strive to provide as much consumers' goods as the budget would allow during his tenure of office as Minister of Light Industry, and that Zverev, his present successor as Finance Minister, occupied the same post as Kosygin does to-day. Now the two rôles are once more reversed. Zverev is back as Finance Minister, and Kosygin as Minister of

Light Industry. This indicates, first of all, that they make a good team and know each other's signals. In the Bolshevik hierarchy, Kosygin, as candidate member of the Politburo, is—or at any rate, has been—greatly superior to Zverev. But today the demand by the Russian people for consumers' goods is as extensive as it is natural. Kosygin, politically the superior of the two, was put in charge of Finance to handle the reform of the currency a year and a half ago, and was charged with all the complicated processes of conversion from wartime to peacetime economy. Today that job is done, and Finance can once more be handled by a technician, Zverev, whereas a man of Kosygin's superior standing is now needed to meet, as far as possible, the overwhelming public demand for consumers' goods.

There is no good reason to consider the whole business, save for the Bulganin-Vasilevsky switch, which has its own explanation, as more than a simple matter of promotion in which trusted subordinates get a step up, which they have deserved, to give their chiefs greater freedom for other work, or, in the case of Kosygin-Zverev, the kind of reshuffle which is common Bolshevik practice—for instance the Kaganovich-Khrushchev to-and-fro as Party Boss of the Ukraine. Nor is there any *known valid* reason to regard the changes in terms of rivalry—of groups or individuals—within the Politburo, or for that matter in terms of Stalin's speedy demise. Neither possibility can be wholly dismissed—as a *possibility*—but there are no good grounds for accepting either as a *probability*, still less as a basis for the interpretation of Russian affairs. Therefore, I maintain the belief which I expressed in this book, that the Politburo is a tightly knit body, united in loyalty to each other and to its Chief. Far from tending towards disintegration under the pressure of Western hostility—or what the Politburo believes to be Western hostility—its cohesion must be increased rather than lessened by external pressure.

The at present unknown factors in this whole discussion will doubtless appear and be explained at the forthcoming Congress of the Communist Party. I say "forthcoming" although no one yet knows when it will meet. That it will meet some time this year is likely. Already there have been held all manner of Party Congresses of the various constituent republics and, recently, the U.S.S.R.-wide Congress of the Communist Youth Organization. All these meetings have been held for the first time since the war and indubitably point to the fact that a Party Congress is in the offing, since it has been the practice in the past that a period of time, not less than three months, should be devoted, before the Congress, to discussion by the various party groups throughout the country of the main subjects to be considered at the Congress itself. If this practice is followed, it would seem that the Congress will not meet before the latter part of the summer of 1949.

At any rate, it may be assumed that a Congress will meet not later than six months hence, and perhaps sooner. Then we shall see just what, if any, are the changes in the Politburo which, I repeat, is the supreme centre of power in the U.S.S.R. If Voznesensky is dropped from the Politburo; if Marshal Vasilevsky is admitted, even as a candidate; if Stalin does retire from the Premiership and is succeeded by Molotov, all of that will have its evident importance. But how will it affect the attitude of the U.S.S.R. towards the Western world? Even if one accepts the theory that the "Great Khan is dying," where are the signs of disruption among his followers or the proofs of a fight for his mantle? In my opinion, they are no more than wishful thinking, the hopeful analogy of Churchill about the salvation of Europe "four or five hundred years ago."

It is far more reasonable to suppose that the Bolshevik leaders, the Politburo, still headed by Stalin, are going through a process of reorganization and concentration,

for the reasons I have given earlier, of which Western hostility—or their belief in Western hostility—is not the greatest. They also have, irrespective of the West, a gigantic internal programme to which Molotov—and, of course, Stalin—has devoted utmost attention for a long time. That is, the successful development of a socialist system in Russia. It must be remembered that these men are fundamentally Communists. They were forced by circumstances to accept a system of socialism which might almost be called State Capitalism, but they did not really like it. Trotsky and his followers attacked Stalin bitterly for trying to controvert Marx's statement that socialism could not be successfully maintained in a single country. Of course, Marx used the word "country" in terms of Germany, France, or England rather than a great continental power such as the U.S.S.R. is to-day. Stalin understood this and went ahead, at all costs, with his policy of socializing the U.S.S.R. But he did it, always, with the idea in the back of his head that ultimately this "socialism" would be replaced by the communism at which he and Lenin had aimed.

I venture to suggest that Stalin and the Politburo today are not so vitally concerned by the imminence of war as most of us Westerners believe, but are profoundly concerned by the ultimate attainment of communism in their own country and are directing at least a considerable part of their efforts toward that goal. In this sense, then, it may be assumed that the experience of such leading Bolsheviks as Molotov, Mikoyan, and Bulganin in preparing their country for war and carrying it through the war may henceforth be devoted to the wider and deeper aim of preparing it for communism.

All, or most of this, will be made clear by the Party Congress. But in the meantime we are more particularly concerned with the present foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. I have already mentioned in this book its development, and the counter-developments in the West since the

Potsdam Conference; but since writing, yet another factor has entered the situation—the signing in Washington by fourteen nations of the Atlantic Alliance. What impact is this likely to have on the Politburo?

As matters now stand, Russian foreign policy is likely to be dominated in the immediate future by three considerations:

1. That Russia is in no condition to contemplate war at present. Apart from its terrific losses in man-power and material, and its overwhelming need for reconstruction, that is, to heal its wounds and repair its shattered cities, the U.S.S.R. is faced by the vast unknown potentialities of the atomic bomb and the immensely superior productive power of the U.S.A. in all the realms of war-making industry. Moreover the Atlantic Alliance makes it all but certain that not only the productive power but the military man-power too of America would be used in support of the nations of Western Europe.

2. The Russians now must understand this and consequently cannot fail to regard their further progress westwards as impossible at the present.

3. The past history of Russia for more than a hundred years has shown a swing of interest and intensity from West to East and vice versa. When they met obstacles in the West, they expanded in the East. When things went wrong in the East, they swung back towards the West.

To sum up, therefore, it is now probable that the Russians will pursue a policy of stand-patting or even partial compromise in the West and turn their eyes eastwards where they hold strong cards. In Asia, China, Indonesia, Indo-China, Malaya, and elsewhere, the Russians can play on two vital factors. First, what might be called the internal revolutionary possibility, the uprising of landless peasants and other sufferers from misgovernment against their capitalist or feudal masters. That sentiment

of revolt is widespread from the China Sea to the Persian Gulf. Second, there is the desire of Eastern peoples to free themselves from foreign, Western, suzerainty, the sentiment of nationalism which in the final instance would prefer—as the Dutch are discovering—misgovernment or poor government by its own people to any government, however enlightened and altruistic, by Western foreigners.

Take, as a single instance, the case of Korea. Northern Korea was occupied by the Russians, Southern Korea by the Americans. From Northern Korea the Russian armies have withdrawn, leaving a so-called “National Government of the Korean People,” whose leaders have recently been given a terrific reception in Moscow with pompous personal welcome by Stalin and by Shvernik, the President of the U.S.S.R. The propaganda appeal, not only to the Southern Koreans but to all the subjugated peoples of the Orient who are striving for independence against their foreign masters, is as obvious as it is powerful.

I need hardly stress the recent vast Communist gains in China. Less noticed has been the advance of the Communist Party of Japan, which not only feeds on the “Bolshevism” of the Japanese underdog masses, but which is resuscitating those strident slogans of “Japan for the Japanese” and “Asia for the Asiatics,” with which we were so familiar before the war and which now may help Russia to gain in the East more than it has lost, or is losing, in the West.

W. D.

*April, 1949*



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